



# MY AMERICAN FRIENDS

TO MY FRIEND

DEAN WILLARD L. SPERR

*Other works by the same author*

---

MAD SHEPHERDS  
THE ALCHEMY OF THOUGHT  
ALL MEN ARE GHOSTS  
THE LEGENDS OF SMOKEOVER  
THE HEROES OF SMOKEOVER  
THE CHALLENGE OF LIFE  
REALITIES AND SHAMS  
THE ART OF LIVING TOGETHER  
MY NEIGHBOUR THE UNIVERSE  
A LIVING UNIVERSE  
RELIGIOUS PERPLEXITIES  
THE INNER SENTINEL  
THE EDUCATION OF THE WHOLE MAN  
EDUCATION THROUGH RECREATION  
LIFE AND LETTERS OF STOPFORD BROOKE  
LIFE OF CHARLES HARGROVE

# MY AMERICAN ~~FRIENDS~~

*By*  
L. P. JACKS

CONSTABLE & CO LTD  
LONDON

PUBLISHED BY  
*Constable and Company Ltd.*  
LONDON

*Oxford University Press*  
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS

*first published 1933*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
MACKAYS LIMITED, CHATHAM

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	vii
I PROBLEMS AND PEOPLE . . . . .	I
II MAINLY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL . . . . .	12
III CITIES . . . . .	27
IV SIDEWALKS . . . . .	37
V AMERICA THE SELF-CRITICAL . . . . .	48
VI THE AMERICAN INTELLIGENTSIA . . . . .	61
VII THE RHODES SCHOLARS . . . . .	67
VIII AMERICA THE UNREAL . . . . .	82
IX THE CALIFORNIANS . . . . .	93
X IN SEARCH OF "THE HUNDRED PER CENT AMERICAN" . . . . .	107
XI BIRTHDAY LETTER TO SUSIE OF ARIZONA . . . . .	122
XII THE GRAND CANYON OF ARIZONA . . . . .	126
XIII STANDARDIZATION . . . . .	132
XIV CHILDREN . . . . .	146
XV EDUCATION . . . . .	158
XVI DARK PROBLEMS . . . . .	173
XVII AMERICAN RECREATION . . . . .	183

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XVIII	“ THE SUNSHINE CITY ”	193
XIX	A HINT FOR MUNICIPAL POLICY	201
XX	IN OKLAHOMA	208
XXI	INDOORS AND OUTDOORS	218
XXII	AMERICAN ATHLETICS	229
XXIII	WALKING DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE	238
XXIV	ECHOES OF THE REVOLUTION	244

## PREFACE

THE names of cities standing at the head of the chapters must not be taken to mean that this book is a traveller's diary. Such a diary was indeed kept, with a full record of notable incidents and conversations, especially of the latter, to which I attach great importance in my studies of America. A few of these conversations I have reproduced, but oftener given only the substance of them. Here and there, also, I have described an incident, grave or gay, which started a train of thought. Beyond this I shall not trouble the reader with my adventures in the United States of America. If I did, my book would be many times the size of this one. In general the place-name merely indicates that something connected with that city or its inhabitants, or some incident or conversation there, fixed my thoughts on the subject named in the chapter heading. Thus in Philadelphia my thoughts turned to the Declaration of Independence; in Washington, to politics and politicians; in Hollywood, to unrealities; in Chicago, to dark problems; in New York, to American cities in general. Some of the chapters were in fact written, or at least sketched, in the

## PREFACE

cities whose names they carry and were thus born, so to speak, in the atmosphere of the place, though I have made no effort to reproduce it. If in any case I have done so unconsciously, so much the better.

The persons to whom my thanks are due are indicated by the title of the book, and there are so many of them, and my collective debt to them is so great, that adequate acknowledgment, to say nothing of particularization, is out of the question. To these must be added my wife, an English-woman whom I first met on American soil many years ago and who graciously crowned that adventure by bearing me company throughout the last and longest of my American tours.

# CHAPTER I

## PROBLEMS AND PEOPLE

*Uno itinere at tam grande secretum pervenire non potest.*

*Charleston, S. Carolina.*

AMERICA is the problem-hunter's Paradise. Most of the problems that agitate the Old World, though not all, are here reproduced, but with two important differences—first, the elements of which they are composed are quantitatively larger, and second, they are interlocked with others peculiar to America. Unemployment affords an example ready to hand: it is on a greater scale than in any other country; so much so that the difference of quantity tends to become a difference of quality, while, in addition to that, the unemployed are not uniformly of one race, but of many races and of different colours, white, black and yellow; a difference which brings the problem of unemployment, shared by America with other nations, into contact with race problems and colour problems peculiar to herself. From the point of view of one who loves problems for their own sake, as many

of us do, from the point of view, that is, of the professional problem-hunter, these differences are an attraction in favour of America. They enlarge the area of discussion, add zest to the game and render it more difficult to reach those final conclusions which, if once they were reached, would leave the hunter with nothing more to hunt—a man without an occupation.

Thus, what is the hunting of small game in the Old World becomes the hunting of big game in America; we are no longer shooting at rabbits and partridges but at buffaloes and grizzly bears. Or, to change the figure, problems which the Old World writes in the small characters proper to a sheet of paper are written in America in the large letters proper to a blackboard, or in the presumably larger letters of the writing on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. And, again, problems which are less distinctly outlined elsewhere stand out more distinctly in America. The present economic crisis might be quoted as an example. I would not suggest that the problem of the crisis is illegible anywhere, but in America you will find it written in letters of fire. The problem; not the answer. There as elsewhere "the magicians, the astrologers, the soothsayers and the Chaldeans" are astray; but the confusion of their tongues is more pronounced. There is no Daniel in America but one feels the need of him perhaps more than in Europe.

To say that the Americans enjoy their problems

would be misleading, if not untrue. But they certainly enjoy discussing them, both those they have in common with the Old World, and those that are peculiarly their own. This form of recreation, which affords relief to so many of our sorrows, is not, of course, confined to Americans. But nowhere else will you find it so widely practised and so eagerly pursued. Just as golf in America is a popular game, and not as in England a game for the well-to-do, so the discussion of America's problems is, broadly speaking, every-man's recreation and every woman's. Broach any one of them to the first stranger you meet—education, prohibition, colour, the “melting-pot,” crime, lawlessness, graft—even international debts—and an interesting half-hour for both of you is almost certain to follow. The other day I talked with a negro here in Charleston who had lost the savings of his life in a bank failure. The poor fellow seemed in the depths of despair, but I turned him on to the colour problem, about which he had many wise things to say, and he departed in the best of spirits. The same thing happened with a wealthy man ruined by the slump, with whom I travelled on the train: our problem this time was international debts, to which he attributed his downfall, and he informed me next morning that he had had an excellent night. The slump has caused intense suffering in America, but it has furnished a feast of problems to those who are partial to that kind of entertainment, as

Americans mostly are. In particular it has been a godsend to "the magicians, astrologers, sooth-sayers and Chaldeans," also a numerous class in America, who make a business of predicting the future of the country.

America being a problem-hunter's Paradise, it is not surprising that most of the books written about her, both by Americans and foreigners, should deal first and foremost or even exclusively with her problems, social, political, economic, industrial, moral and religious. Not for a moment would I suggest that this is an unfruitful or uninteresting way of approaching the subject. Indeed I have been tempted to take it myself in writing this book; but refrained on realizing my incompetence and on remembering, further, how well that aspect has been dealt with by others; for example, by Mr. James Truslow Adams among Americans and by M. André Siegfried among foreigners. America's problems are an essential part of her existence and no account of her which neglected them would be worth the paper it is written on. But, as the motto at the head of this chapter reminds us, "*uno itinere at tam grande secretum pervenire non potest.*" In choosing another way for myself I am not criticizing the way chosen by anybody else. I admit the profound interest to all mankind of America's problems. But to me her people are more interesting than her problems, and even greater. I have learnt to love them with 4

warmth of affection second only to that which binds me to my own countrymen, and in some measure derived from it. It is of them, therefore, that I shall mainly write; or rather of those whom I may call "my friends"—a relatively small number, no doubt, but yet typical of millions. Not that the two lines of approach can be kept rigidly distinct. In this problem-haunted land they cross and mingle at many points, but never so completely as to absorb the people in the problems. At the last analysis the human element always stands out as the greater coefficient. So at least I have found it.

The mutual understanding of the American and British peoples is so important to the general welfare of mankind that anybody who can make even a small contribution to that object has a duty to make it. If the Americans and the British cannot understand one another what other two peoples can? Even if it were true, in general, as Spengler seems to think, that all nations are isolated units, incapable of understanding one another, I would make an exception in favour of the Americans and the British. My reason for thinking so is, and it will appear more fully in the course of this book, that they are nearer to mutual understanding now than they were at any previous point of my long acquaintance with America, nearer, but still a long way off. It may be very little I have to contribute to the end in view; I fear it is; but my travels in the country have been

so extensive and cover such a long period of time that I feel it would be rather disgraceful if I were quite empty-handed. This is not the first time I have been tempted to write a book about America; my American friends have often urged me to do so; but I have refrained hitherto on realizing the insufficiency of my knowledge, and am glad that I have. The same difficulty confronts me now. For there is a sense in which nobody, not even an American, knows or can know enough to write a satisfactory book about America; the country is too vast, the people too heterogeneous, the forces at work too mighty, too complex, too mysterious to permit of complete interpretation by any human mind, even the most powerful. These considerations may well give me pause. But the approach of "Time's wingèd chariot" is becoming audible and I reflect that, unless I make haste, one more may be added to the list of duties left undone.

And since actions which proclaim a sense of duty for their motive are said to be open to suspicion, I may as well confess to a motive of a less portentous kind. I mean the pleasure of writing about people whose kindness of heart stands out—at least in my experience—as the most eminent of their qualities. There is truth in the saying that if ever you meet a human being who has no kindness of heart, the odds are that he is not an American. To pass the immigration officer at an American port may indeed remind

you of the rich man's difficulty in entering the kingdom of heaven, but the friends who are waiting for you on the quay show a different spirit.

There are three rules which anybody who writes a book about America should do his best to observe, though—*experto crede*—he will find perseverance in them, especially in the first, rather difficult.

1. *Avoid generalizations.* All generalizations about America—except this one—are likely to be false. But the temptation to make them is great. The phenomena under observation are so various and discordant that one is often tempted to save himself the trouble of describing them by resorting to summary statements—only to repent of them on turning over the next page of his experience. And, again, American characteristics, both good and evil, are so strongly marked, that one is in constant danger of regarding this or that as *typical*—only to find the contrary characteristic staring him in the face next day. These statements, I am aware, are themselves generalizations; but they fall under the exception reserved above.

2. *Judge nothing in America by the point at which it has arrived. Judge all things by the direction in which they are moving.* Many things which are fixed in the Old World are fluid in America. Things which move slowly here move rapidly there. Education, for example. If an Englishman—especially one with the standards peculiar to our older universities—were to judge

American education by the point at which it has now arrived, he would probably judge it unfavourably. But on looking nearer he would observe that American education is in the state of experimentation and moving at certain points in directions that are full of promise and may possibly lead hereafter to results of great value, as examples to mankind at large.

3. Whenever the observer is struck by a feature which seems to him peculiarly good or peculiarly evil, *let him at once look out for its contrary*. He is sure to find it. Let him observe also how definitely the two things are *in conflict*, how close, if I may say so, is the grip which good and evil in America have on each other's throats. The tendency to exaggeration which characterizes so many currents of American life (though not all) seems to extend itself to good and evil. They exist in their extreme forms and the conflict between them is one of extreme intensity. What is elsewhere a struggle between good and evil here becomes a struggle between the best and the worst, the best being very good and the worst very bad. And yet it is not by a study of either extreme, nor by a study first of one and then of another, that the observer will arrive at a true interpretation of what he observes. The significant fact is not the *existence* of these opposites but the fierce struggle for mastery in which they are everywhere engaged.

And yet even the strictest observance of the

above rules will not relieve us of our difficulties. There is one phrase in particular which the writer of a book like this cannot avoid the frequent use of, but which, every time he uses it, becomes a pit-fall waiting to receive him—"the American people." Who are they? To be sure they are the people inhabiting the United States of America and there are 125 million of them. But you soon discover that the quality which makes them "American" exists in very various degrees; a fact which they themselves, or at least some of them, proclaim by setting up one variety as "a hundred per cent" American, with the implication, I suppose, that the American quality exists in all degrees from zero up to the full hundred of perfection. This, at first sight, might seem to simplify your task. Find the "hundred percenter" and you have got the characteristic American type and, with that type before you, can indulge as freely as you like in statements about "the American people." But the "hundred percenter" is not so easily found; in a subsequent chapter my own difficulties in finding him will be described. The Americans themselves are not agreed among themselves as to who he is, or as to what kind of a person he is likely to be; or indeed as to whether he exists at all. I have my own notions on the subject and will disclose them in due course; but I have no warrant for saying that a single American would agree with me.

This state of things, strange as it may appear to

one accustomed to the greater, though by no means perfect, uniformities of older countries becomes intelligible in the light of America's history. A fairly clear distinction exists between the descendants of the settlers prior to the Revolution (who are not now confined to the eastern parts where they originally settled, but spread all over the country) and the immigrants or descendants of immigrants who came in ever-increasing waves till the end of the nineteenth century and for some twelve years afterwards. But to which of the two we should look for the characteristic American quality is not so easily determined. It seems natural that the older element should be given prior claim; but the newer elements are vastly in the majority and in some regions comprise almost the entire population; and if it is true on the one hand that the Old Americans have put their "stamp" on the New, it is equally true that the New have greatly influenced the Old, both by intermixture and otherwise; which means, of course, that the "stamp" is itself undergoing change. The only conclusion seems to be that the "American people" has not yet emerged, but is in process of emergence. We may compare its present state to that of the lion in Milton's account of the Creation, as he emerges half-formed from the heaving clods:

"Now half appeared  
The tawny lion, pawing to get free  
His hinder parts."

The full emergence will be less rapid than with Milton's lion; but no doubt it will be written in some future "Epic of America":

*"then springs, as broke from bonds,  
And rampant shakes his brinded mane."*

I am far from claiming, then, that my qualifications for writing this book are complete. I wish they were. In the next chapter the reader may learn how and when I acquired such knowledge of America as I happen to possess. It is autobiographical only to that extent.

## CHAPTER II

### MAINLY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

*Boston, Mass.*

My acquaintance with the American people dates from 1886 when I went as a post-graduate student to Harvard University, an unusual thing, in those days, for an English student to do, though not unusual now. I well remember Charles Eliot Norton, the Professor of Belles Lettres, for whom I had conceived, and still retain, an unbounded admiration, saying to me one day, " My dear young man, what on earth has brought you to this uncivilized place ? " I knew, of course, that " uncivilized " was only Professor Norton's way of putting things, and that he would have resented the word if I had used it myself as a description of his university; nevertheless, I had to tell him that it was not the love of learning but the spirit of adventure which had brought me to Harvard and led me to enrol myself as one of his students. The explanation seemed to please him, and from that time onward he took a kindly interest in me, often inviting me to his house on Shady Hill, when he would delight me with his conversation, he being one of those who are ready to give of their best to the humblest recipient. He it was

who introduced me to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, most of which I read through with him, he translating and I learning to translate; nor is there anything for which I owe a greater debt of gratitude to any man.

Other eminent men with whom I then came into contact were William James, then approaching the height of his power, Josiah Royce, John Fiske, Dean Carroll Everett and Francis G. Peabody, now the sole survivor of that group, all generous givers of their best to the young. With President Eliot, dwelling, as it seemed to me, on heights too awful for my approach, I had no dealings at that time, though I made his acquaintance in after years and came to reverence him as a great man who, if the American people had wanted a dictator, would have been a likely man for the office, a tower of strength to the righteous and a terror to humbugs and evildoers. Incidentally also—and perhaps it was more than an incident—I saw a good deal of the social life of Boston and its suburbs, nor was I altogether unknown in the drawing-rooms of Commonwealth Avenue, brilliant in those days as they still are. All this that I saw was, of course, but a drop in the vast and turbulent ocean of American life, rather a reaction against its turbulence than a reflexion of it, as I was afterwards to learn. No doubt at that time I took it for a much larger drop than it really was, or has since become—an error not uncommon with my countrymen when visiting those parts.

On the whole, I look back upon that year as one of mental liberation, and for that reason perhaps the most important in my life. Hitherto my education had been transacted in a rather stuffy atmosphere and, though I had done fairly well in the examination department and taken a not-disgraceful degree, I was, to all intents and purposes, a profoundly ignorant and narrowly limited young man. It was Norton, I think, with his Dante readings and the subtle comments that flowed from them, and next to him William James, with his power of seeing through words and phrases to the realities they conceal (the essence of pragmatism) who first aroused me to open the eyes which mere book-learning had closed. What wonder that my acquaintance with the American people, begun at a point so favourable and at a time of life when impressions sink deep, should have ripened into my present love of them, surviving the shock of many subsequent disillusionments, but continually quickened as my knowledge widened of the bitter conflict which the better elements of that nation sustain against the worse.

From among the abundant memories of this *annus mirabilis* of my youth I will select but one, which may possibly furnish the reader with a moment's entertainment and throw a passing gleam of light on New York as it then was.

At Harvard I had formed a friendship, which lasted till his death, with the metaphysician Josiah

Royce, a man little older than myself, an expert in dialectics, but with enough of the devil in his otherwise saintly composition to make him an interesting, amusing and profitable companion. The Easter vacation coming round, he and I agreed that the occasion was timely for getting the taste of philosophy out of our mouths or, as he put it, for suspending our attempts "to fix a bit of salt on the tail of the Absolute," which both of us for some months past had been trying to do with indifferent success, at least on my part. To effect this laudable diversion he proposed that we should go off together for a lark in New York. The main feature of the "lark" as outlined by him was that we should act for the time being as though we were millionaires, which we were very far from being, treating ourselves to all the luxuries our hearts might desire and sticking it out as long as the funds would allow. The motive for the adventure was, of course, "to extend the range of our experience," a motive, I observe, by which philosophers, especially young ones, often excuse their transactions with the powers of darkness. On counting up the cash at my disposal I foresaw that a lark of this kind would necessarily be of brief duration and would probably be followed by general bankruptcy; but I reflected that whatever might happen to my economic fortunes, my moral interests would be safe in company with so eminent a philosopher, as indeed they turned out to be.

To New York accordingly we went, travelling thither *en prince*, and staying at the Windsor Hotel (then highly fashionable but long since demolished), where we feasted on delicate food and costly wines, issuing thence in expensive hansom cabs to take our seats in the front rows of the opera house or theatre, Royce being a great lover of music and the drama. In the intervals of these dissipations and sometimes in the midst of them Royce, forgetting our original compact, would continue to fortify my soul with the consolations of his philosophy. He was a great talker and when once launched on one of his theories showed a tendency to interminable monologue, a weakness I have often observed among American conversationalists of both sexes, by some attributed to the climate, though what the climate has to do with it I could never find out. Well, it was a fine Sunday morning, and we were luxuriously taking the air in Fifth Avenue, which I have since come to know under very different conditions, our object being to see the astonishing display of horses and carriages which the New Yorkers then boasted of as "the finest church parade in the world." But alas for the Englishman who goes out sight-seeing with an eloquent American for his companion! He might as well shut his eyes completely, and a pad of cotton wool in the ear nearest his companion would be a comfort, especially when riding in a hansom cab. It so happened that Royce, at this time, was all agog

with a new speculation which had to do, I think, with the doctrine of the Atonement and centred on "the Hell of the Irrevocable," a metaphysical institution which Royce was the first to name, if not to create. I had previously told him that I knew of hotter hells than that, and that possibly there was a "heaven" of the irrevocable as well as a "hell"; which feeble argument of mine he, unable to stop himself as usual, was now busy in controverting as we drove up and down the Avenue in our hansom cab. Outside rose the jingling of horses' harness, while the interior of our hansom buzzed with the Atonement, so that to this day I can never hear that word without an echo of jingling harness mingling with the sound, and the vision of a splendid church parade presenting itself to the mental eye.

But there was something more. As I listened to Royce's monologue it suddenly occurred to me that the "hell of the irrevocable" was an exact description of my present condition. My money was irrevocably gone; by no effort of mine and by no entreaties addressed to the gods could the sum I had squandered in New York be revoked into my pocket; my hotel bill paid, three dollars would represent the total of my liquid resources in the universe; and it was irrevocably so. Swiftly I formed the decision to beat a retreat however ignominious—the first and only occasion in my life when I can remember a metaphysical argument influencing my conduct either for good

or ill. That evening I paid my bill with the nonchalance of a millionaire, set out baggage in hand (a hansom cab being now out of the question) for a wharf at the other end of the city, where I took passage for Boston at the less honourable end of a steamer, leaving my metaphysical friend to come to the same decision a day or two later. On arriving at Boston after a miserable night in evil company my remaining assets consisted of one ten-cent piece and this, though breakfastless, I kept in reserve to pay my fare by the horse-tram to Cambridge, for I was very tired. As the car was crossing the Charles River Bridge—I have good reason for remembering the spot—I handed this precious coin to the conductor; he examined it suspiciously and then threw it back at me; there was a mark on it which showed that it was counterfeit. I had no resource but to leave the car which I had just boarded and walk through a snow blizzard to Cambridge, meditating on the "hell of the irrevocable." So ended my first and last attempt to impersonate a millionaire. Clearly the gods had not approved of it.

Such was the starting point. So far I had seen next to nothing, in area, of the country, a conventional trip to Niagara being the utmost in the way of travel my means, after the New York episode, would allow. On my next visit, in 1907, when I was no longer a student-adventurer but a man with important responsibilities to discharge, I moved more widely afield, but still

not widely enough to open my vision to the immense and heterogeneous reality covered by the word America. Perhaps I fancied myself an experienced traveller in the country, but I was experienced only in the sense that I could find my way about, knew the technique of the railroads and hotels, so far as a traveller needs to know it, could order my meals with some knowledge of what I was ordering—for instance, that if I ordered roast beef, I should get four times as much as I could eat—and not make the mistake of under-tipping the waiter.

Mr. Bryce (afterwards Lord Bryce), whom I had known in England, was then newly installed as our Ambassador at Washington. My business requiring me to see him, I lunched with him one day at the Embassy and I remember him gently warning me, after listening to some remarks of mine, against thinking I knew more about America than I really did, which warning I have never forgotten and hope to keep steadily before me in the course of writing this book.

I was by no means an important visitor either in Washington or anywhere else, but my business was sufficiently important to cause my American friends, especially in the universities, to get up occasional dinner parties at which I was the guest of honour. As a warning to Englishmen accorded this kind of honour by Americans perhaps the following incident, taken from my diary of 1907, may have its use. Being invited to a

dinner party by a lady, I had forgotten the hour of the dinner and had to telephone to my hostess for information. Now I have always had a difficulty in hearing the voices of American women when speaking on the telephone; they are pitched in a key to which I am not accustomed; and they, reciprocally, have a difficulty in hearing me. On this occasion neither my hostess nor I succeeded in achieving intelligibility. For some time we yelled at one another to no purpose, she apparently getting more exasperated as the imbroglio deepened. At last her voice came through quite distinctly: "What damn fool is this," she cried, "trying to talk the English language to an educated American woman?" Whereupon I managed to make her understand that I was the guest of the evening, and the conversation assumed a different tone. Subsequently I took her into dinner, and found her a charming companion, the conversation turning mainly on the poetry of Wordsworth.

Other visits followed in 1909, 1910, 1912 and 1913, three of them including Canada, which I traversed from east to west. On the last two occasions, 1912 and 1913, I spent the long vacation in the Maritime Provinces of Canada, mainly in New Brunswick, where I perpetrated the folly (afterwards repented of) of purchasing part of a long deserted settlement with 400 acres of backwoods (I gave 800 dollars for it) where a man might live for months with no companions

but the moose, the black bears—amusing little fellows they were—and the ghosts of the former inhabitants. My Canadian experiences will not be dwelt upon in this book, though they have contributed not a little to forming the perspective in which the rest of my impressions are placed.

The War intervening, eleven years elapsed before I again found myself on American soil and among American friends—in 1924. There was a course of lectures to be delivered at Harvard, another at Yale, after which I wandered through the Eastern States and the Middle West lecturing to public audiences on various subjects connected with philosophy and religion. Accustomed as I was to the benevolent incredulities of Oxford I found an immense refreshment in the keenness of my American audiences, often finding that subjects, the announcement of which would have ensured me an almost empty auditorium at home, would draw a crowd of eager-faced, attentive people in almost any American city, great or small. Often, of course, people would come who were not interested in what I had to say and after listening to a few sentences and coming to the conclusion that “it was all bunk” would promptly get up and walk out; not very good manners, perhaps, but preferable to those of the hearer who sits the lecture through yawning in the lecturer’s face or chatting to his neighbour. It was certainly no personal fame of my own that drew people to hear me, for in many of the cities I visited I was till then

entirely unknown. They were just “interested in the subject” and perhaps a little curious as to how an Englishman would treat it.

On one occasion the latter motive took a form somewhat more distinct. I had been addressing a Women’s Club in a mid-western city and was much flattered on being told that the attendance had been the largest on record. But my vanity subsided considerably when I discovered the reason for the large attendance. It appeared that these ladies had recently been engaged in a discussion on the pronunciation of the English language; they had been addressed by a college president who boasted that his own pronunciation was such that he was constantly mistaken for an Englishman, and the Club being in doubt about the validity of his claim (as well they might be, for I happened to know that college president) had turned out in force in the hope that my own pronunciation would throw light on the disputed points. What the verdict was I never learnt. But a lady came up to me and after declaring that my address was the most—I forget what—she had ever listened to, concluded as follows—“I came here in terror lest you should have an Oxford accent. Somebody told me you had it badly. Thank heaven, you haven’t a trace of it! *But have you?*” I said that I didn’t know whether I had the disease or not: like the man who was fined forty shillings for being drunk and disorderly I could only “appeal to posterity.”

And here I will venture a word to those of my British countrymen who may go on lecturing, gospelling, peace-promoting, debt-cancelling or other missionary tours among our American cousins—*beware of the Oxford accent*. Other accents, Scottish, Welsh, Yorkshire, Devonshire, Norfolk, even pure Cockney, may be freely indulged in. You may even misplace your h's, which the Americans (with some inconsiderable exceptions in the south) never do, without losing the respect of your audience. But if you practise the Oxford accent, or the Cambridge ditto—the Americans cannot distinguish the two—you will find that it afflicts your hearers. Moreover, it will cause them to think that the British are an exhausted race and that what you are talking about is “bunk.” To my knowledge, many otherwise admirable speeches and sermons, intended to inspire American audiences with more fraternal feelings towards other nations, have failed of their effect through inattention to this little matter: and once or twice when my own reception was flatter than I hoped for I had reason to suspect that the reason lay in my lapsing inadvertently into an “Oxford manner.”

More reassuring was an experience I had at a public luncheon somewhere in Texas, when a jocular chairman introduced me by saying that from the way I pronounced the English language he felt sure that one of my ancestors had come from his own birthplace in Maine. I replied that from

the way the chairman pronounced the American language I felt sure that one of his ancestors had come from England, though I thought it must have been long ago. All which was very well taken by the jocular chairman; for an American will always permit you to make fun of his peculiarities when the operation proceeds by give and take. But seldom otherwise.

In 1929 I undertook an extensive tour under the auspices of the American Association for Adult Education. On the subject of adult education I had already indulged in some revolutionary language at home and had got myself into a little trouble by once describing it as "university-and-water" and by using other terminology considered "disrespectful to the equator."

In the course of this tour which ranged from New York to Chicago, and thence into Texas, I used to tell my audiences that of all the people in the world who stood in need of adult education the one who seemed to me to need it most was myself, and I would sometimes venture, perhaps rather impudently, to ask my chairman, especially if he happened to be a college president, how he felt about the matter in his own case. I found that the chairman never ventured to disagree, at least openly, either with respect to himself or me; nor did anybody else. I would then suggest the setting up of an open confessional, in which educators should come together for the purpose of confessing their sins and resolving on amendment.

The Americans took this very kindly and the audience, at the conclusion of my talk, would often resolve itself into just such a confessional as I had suggested.

In the following year, 1930, I became acquainted with the National Recreation Association of America, whose Conference I attended at Atlantic City at the suggestion of my friend Mr. John Finley of the *New York Times*, one of the directors of the Association. Greatly impressed by the personnel of this movement, and encouraged by the interest shown in what I said, I was led to study the movement more closely and became convinced that it represented an interesting current of American life, but one which I had previously known nothing of. I knew, of course, that the notion of America as a land of universal hustle, "go-getting" and dollar worship was far from being the "whole truth and nothing but the truth," but I was unprepared to find a powerful movement in existence, with nation-wide ramifications, working in the opposite direction. Here was a large body of men and women, comprising thoughtful and public-spirited citizens from all parts of the United States, genuinely interested in the art of wise living. The movement had begun thirty years ago with the modest ideal of "giving every child in America a chance to play," and from that, a natural growing point, had developed into a bold and many-sided attempt to cope with "the problem of leisure" as presented by the

conditions of industrial America. Industrial depression, already advanced in 1930, was quickening inquiry into the question, “What will the community do with the ever-increasing amount of work-free time which the progressive application of science to industry is bringing about, and of which the present phenomenon of unemployment is a foretaste ? ” I had often heard the same question asked at home, and indeed taken some small part myself in asking it, but this was the first time I had come into contact with a national movement whose leaders were alive to the gravity of the problem and intent upon grappling with its enormous difficulties. Obviously, I had much to gain, both in knowledge and inspiration, from further contact with the work of the Association. Accordingly when its leaders asked me to give wider hearing to the ideas I had ventilated at their Conference I did not hesitate to give an affirmative answer. The consequence was that I undertook the longest of my American tours, and the most instructive. It occupied nine months of 1931-1932, and took me into forty-two of the forty-eight States of the American Union, brought me into contact everywhere with interesting groups of men and women, and revealed to me aspects of American life of which I had previously known little, either from reading books about America, or from personal experience. A glance at the map which accompanies this book will show the reader the area over which I travelled and the cities I visited.

## CHAPTER III

### CITIES

#### *New York.*

THE rural population of America has been greatly depleted in recent years by the drift to the towns, but still numbers nearly half the total for the country, scattered over a vast area. Yet, in spite of this vast area and the millions engaged in the cultivation of the land, Mr. Chesterton was not far wrong when he described America as a country with no villages. There are many places which Americans call by that name but none, so far as my observation goes, which corresponds, except perhaps remotely, to what an Englishman means by it. To such places I have often been taken by friends, sometimes in response to my definite request to see a "village," but could never find in any of them the thing I was in search of—a thing difficult to define, I must admit (except in a dictionary), but one of which no Englishman needs a definition. One would turn out to be a residential preserve; another a small town dating, perhaps, from Colonial days and tolerably picturesque; another a hugger-mugger of shacks with negroes sunning themselves on the

doorsteps; another a colony of Italian or Japanese market-gardeners ("truck-farmers" they call them here) dwelling in painted wooden houses placed at haphazard in the landscape, with a smell of celery pervading the atmosphere; another a sprawling, amorphous region dotted with untidy farm houses, all exactly alike even to the abominable litter surrounding them; another, perhaps, just in the place where a village ought to be, a flamboyant collection of restaurants, filling stations, apple stalls, hot-doggeries, chicken-luncheries and other devices for the ministration of victuals, a car-haunted, advertisement disfigured creation of yesterday, noisy by day and gorgeously lit up at night by electric power generated from the neighbouring cataract. To reach even such places as these one has generally to go far afield, at least from the great cities, passing through dismal intermediate regions of great extent, littered with human habitations, factories, gas tanks, industrial débris, derelict cars and rubbish of every conceivable denomination—unspeakable regions bearing on their forehead the signs of eternal reprobation, more distinctly, I think, than our British slums, though these, God knows, have it distinctly enough. For sheer ugliness the earth has nothing worse to show than the bedraggled skirts of New York, Philadelphia, Chicago and many another. If a master of men were to take command of us surely the rebuilding of cities would be the first task he would order

our civilization to get done, and for the next generation or so there would be no unemployed in America or anywhere else.

This must not be taken to mean that America is deficient in rural beauty; she has it in super-abundance and of every conceivable variety; but very unevenly distributed, some regions having more than they know what do to with, others, apparently, none at all, save that of the level earth and the over-arching sky. But of villages I have seen not one, in the strict but indefinable sense conveyed by the word to the mind of an Englishman, whose love of his country is so often a village-born emotion. I think, therefore, that Mr. Chesterton was right; though he might have been half disposed to make an exception (as I am) had he visited the mountain districts of Tennessee, where the poor whites (the purest Anglo-Saxon stock in America) live their simple but rather miserable life. On the whole it would seem that rural America, attractive as it may be to the tourist, the camper, the landscape painter or the fortunate owner of a country estate is little attractive to those whose life is tied to the soil. The drift towards the cities is so much the more intelligible.

I conclude, then, that the Americans are not a village-minded people. Their gregarious instincts, otherwise not different from those of other nations, are less averse to *crowding* and tend rather to the large, noisy, restless groups that inhabit

cities, than to the small, stationary and relatively silent groups of the village. If an American Falstaff should take to babbling on his deathbed he would be more likely to reflect his nurture by babbling of the crowded streets than of the green fields. Though rural America is enormous in area, and perhaps for that very reason, its countryside has not yet acquired the distinctive characteristics to which the heart of a people responds on hearing them named, characteristics which have only one part to do with nature and three with humanity. She has produced no novelists, no poets, whose writings can be placed under the same category as the village-minded work of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Cowper or Wordsworth. Emerson, Thoreau, Longfellow and Nathaniel Hawthorne belong to a different class. The literature of the wilderness, of the pioneer, the cowboy, the Red Indian, is abundant and often of high quality, but this, though it has nature for its setting, owes nothing to the village.

While America has no villages, she is pre-eminently the land of cities. They lie scattered over the face of the country as though they had been rained from the sky. The Americans are the greatest city-builders the human race has produced, lineal heirs, it would seem, of those early pioneers who wandered into the Plain of Shinar and said one to another, "Go to, let us make bricks and burn them throughly: let us

build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad on the face of the earth." Cities that would take the Old World a thousand years to build the Americans will build you in fifty: Oklahoma City bears witness that I speak the truth. And not only are American cities more numerous than those of any other nation but they show you more plainly what cities really *are*, and what destinies men brought upon themselves when the first city was built. Would you see the best things of which cities are capable? America has them ready for you. Would you see the worst? America has them, too. Would you see beauty and ugliness in closest contact; good and evil locked in a wrestle of life and death; your fellow-man risen to his highest here and fallen to his lowest there? Would you swing with the pendulum which lands you in heaven at one end of its arc and in hell at the other? Would you stand at the point where the tension is fiercest between the forces that kill and the forces that make alive? Would you know what it is to have your optimism turned into pessimism, and your pessimism turned back again into optimism, with hardly time gone by to note the change? The place for these experiences is the American city. And you need travel no farther than New York to get them all. New York will explain to you what urban civilization means and all America can do no more.

The English traveller who lands in New York will not have long to wait before somebody will inform him that "New York is not America." He will be warned against drawing hasty conclusions from his experiences in that city, as so many of his countrymen have done, and supposing them true of America as a whole. But if the visitor infers from this that by travelling farther afield he will find some other city which *is* America and proceeds to search for that city, he will find himself embarked on a futile quest. Boston clearly won't do: on the one hand it is too British in its sympathies, and on the other too Irish (or anti-British) in its antipathies. Nor is Chicago much better. For though Chicago prides itself on being characteristically American (which shows I think how little Chicago knows about the rest of the country) the very fact that it does so puts it out of court with Americans belonging elsewhere. The difficulty in finding a characteristic American city is parallel to the difficulty in finding "a hundred per cent American"—to be described in a subsequent chapter.

Once, indeed, I thought I had found it in Salt Lake City, where I saw so much wise living and heard so many sane ideas both about God and man that I was almost tempted to become a Mormon. But when I mentioned this to my American friends in the east and indicated my Mormon leanings, especially in regard to the admirable discipline this movement has established

for the rising generation, my friends burst into merriment not unmixed with indignation. Nor was their indignation appeased when I went on incautiously to say that Brigham Young was a true leader of men and came very near my notion of a hundred per cent American. So I was compelled to admit that perhaps I had made a mistake.

I agree that New York is not America. And yet, paradoxically enough, New York is a characteristic American city for that very reason. The country is so full of contradictions, so saturated in paradox, that no city could possibly represent it, except by being a paradox. And that precisely is the character of New York, and of all the great American cities I have visited. Of the small ones a different tale might have to be told.

The only city where I found it difficult to realize that I was in America, was Charleston, South Carolina. I remarked on the matter one day to a citizen of that city. "If this is America," I said, "all the rest I have seen is *not* America." "None of it is America, not even Charleston," he replied. "I mean, of course," he added, "that all of it is America." A similar remark would not be out of place in New York.

Visible beauty and audible ugliness make an ill-assorted pair. But in every American city I have visited I have found these two incompatibles joined together, things of beauty soliciting the eye and, at the same moment, the vilest noises assailing

the ear. I am not unseasoned to the street noises of London and Manchester and even in Oxford, which has now unhappily become a noisy place, I advise my American friends to get their first vision of Magdalen Tower in the early hours, before the traffic has awakened, or under a late-risen moon when the voice of the motor-car is hushed and the airplane roars less frequently from the sky. But it is in New York that I have become most acutely conscious of the devastating effect of noise on one's power to enjoy the beautiful things presented to the eye. There are in New York, amid oceans of appalling ugliness in the back streets and outlying districts, a multitude of beautiful and majestic buildings, vistas of great dignity, and skylines hardly matched by those of any city on earth. But all the time you would be admiring them New York is yelling and shrieking with a voice compounded of all the horrible sounds in the universe. Hootings, screamings, whistlings, bellowings, wailings, rattlings, bangings, hammerings, roarings, crashings, and I know not what else, make up an infernal tumult, comparable only to that which stunned the senses of Dante on entering the precincts of hell. May it not be, I often ask myself, that this continual outrage on beauty inflicted through the ear is a sore impediment to those who would rouse the love of beauty by appealing to the eye, and that the fine arts have little chance of a general revival so long as the people, American or

other, are fed all day long on the diet of audible ugliness. And what shall we say when music itself degenerates into noise? For what else but noise is the thing called jazz, added to the noises in the street and apparently inspired by them? What are those melancholy "croonings" of the human voice, administered by the wireless in hotel lobbies, but Dante's *orribile favelle*, stirred up, like baboon's blood, into the witches' cauldron? And here I am moved to chronicle a lapse from good manners committed by myself this very morning in consequence of the affliction aforesaid.

Perambulating the streets of the city, as my habit is, I am sometimes brought to a point where my sensuous organization ceases to function. Stunned by the hideous noises, hypnotized by the ceaseless rush of the cars and lost to all sense of my individual significance amid the swarming multitudes of my fellow-men, I walk on like one in a dream, a phantom among phantoms, and yet convinced when the dream breaks that I have been engaged in some wonderful experience, like one awakened from an anæsthetic. Thus it happened to me this morning. After a long walk in this deaf and blind condition I arrived, without noticing where I was, in the lobby of my hotel. Here I was suddenly assaulted by a noise viler than any of the streets, and to me so hateful that nothing short of sudden death would render me unconscious of it. It was a jazz band, punctuated

by the voice of a human being, crooning erotic imbecilities into a sound magnifier. Instantly the dream broke and, recognizing where I was, the words "O hell!" involuntarily escaped me, much to the astonishment of a lady, leader of a theosophic cult, who was waiting for an interview.

## CHAPTER IV

### SIDEWALKS

*New York.*

THERE is a feeling of one's human insignificance that arises when contemplating the immensities of the stellar universe. For my part, I have never been greatly troubled by this, though I can't deny that grounds for it exist. The immensities of space have no new terror for those who have felt (as who save the brutish have not?) the more awful immensities of *time* and faced the certainty that in a few years at most the dark kingdoms of oblivion will have swallowed them up. But when I mingle with the human river that flows and eddies on the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue I become aware of my insignificance with a poignant intensity which even the immensities of time somehow fail to produce in me. I become, not unpleasantly but quite distinctly, that paradoxical thing a *positive* nonentity, a mere nothing and yet there to know I am nothing. And that, too, I plainly see, is what I am in the eyes of the countless multitude I mingle with. Were I suddenly to vanish into the invisible air it would make no difference to anybody. I doubt if it would even

be noticed. Everybody is a nonentity to everybody else. Equality at the zero level.

The exception is that of the numerous young men and women, the latter much painted and beauty-shopped, who seem to have met by appointment and to be carrying on some sort of sex adventure. They, at all events, are not nonentities one to the other. I once asked an American friend, "What is it that makes life in this hell of a city tolerable to the young people?" His answer was, "Sex"; and I remembered a saying of M. Bergson, "*Toute notre civilisation est aphrodisiaque.*" "And what makes it tolerable to people like you?" I continued. "It isn't tolerable," he answered, "we all want to escape from it as soon as we have made enough money to buy our freedom"—the first intimation I had of "the philosophy of escape" which I was afterwards to hear much spoken of in other American cities.

On Sunday the sidewalk population on the main thoroughfares (though not in the back areas) thins down and it becomes possible to make your way with tolerable ease and without inhaling at every step the smoke of a questionable cigarette blown out by the Jew just in front. But if you go on a fine Sunday to Coney Island or to the parks, Central Park or the Bronx Park farther out, or Prospect Park in Brooklyn, you will see an astonishing sight—crowds whose multitude can only be compared with the sand

on the seashore or the stars in the Milky Way. Into those open spaces the whole population of the city seems to have discharged itself, after the manner of an inundation.

At Coney Island the beach is carpeted far to your right and far to your left with a broad belt of human forms, sunbathers mostly, and the waters black—no, pinkish—with another belt of water-bathers equally broad and so compact that the sea appears to be held back from the shore by a breakwater of humanity. What a sight for a cannibal to feast his eyes on! What a harvest for death! What an opportunity for a lover of humanity to become intoxicated with love, or for a hater with hate, or for one who is both lover and hater (as so many of us are) to be torn asunder by the conflict of the two emotions and put to his wits' end in the effort to reconcile them. What a challenge to the philosopher to justify his principle of treating every man as an end in himself, to the democrat to show cause why everyone should have a vote, to the shepherd of souls to make himself responsible for a flock so enormous, and to the plain man to answer the question "what difference would it make to the universe or to 'society' if I had never existed or ceased to exist this very instant?" May it not be that humanity itself is suffering from over-production?

I lately spent a Sunday afternoon in Prospect Park; or to speak more accurately, I spent it in the crowd that was gathered there. I was

dimly conscious of being in beautiful surroundings—a place of rolling lawns and stately trees, of shining lakes and tumbling waters, of rocky eminences and shady glens. But dimly conscious only, for I was so closely occupied in urging my way through the press that I was hardly aware either of the wood in the trees or the trees in the wood. The place was overwhelmed with humanity. It is a way the Americans have.

These are the places to indulge yourself in the sense of your human insignificance. And, if I may judge by myself, an instructive train of self-questioning may follow. "Do I *love* these millions?" I have often asked myself. "Do I love them singly? Do I love them all together?" Honesty compels me to answer "No." Do they, does any one of them, love *me*? There is not the faintest indication of it. But is there not something else that I love in them, and that some of them may perhaps love in me—the ideal behind the human mask, the ideal woman in that painted girl which, though she paint an inch thick, she cannot wholly hide; the ideal man in that spitting ruffian who has just blown the smoke of his nasty cigar into my face and whose conversation, as I catch stray fragments of it, seems to be all about "hell" and "God" and the general damnation of all things. Do I love *that*? Why, yes, to be sure I do! But then I find that I have changed the meaning of "love" in order to persuade myself that I am still a Christian.

Weight for weight in pounds avoirdupois a hundred men and women swept up at random from the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue or Coney Island Beach would certainly scale heavier than a hundred swept up from the sidewalks of Piccadilly or the beach at Ramsgate; they would be found to have more flesh on their bones and (I suspect) more food in the department of the interior. They would also extend farther in yards linear if laid out in a straight line end to end, and cover a larger area if flattened out into thin slabs, like kippered herrings; for they are both taller and bulkier than their London counterparts. In point of good looks there is probably not much to choose, and it is hard to say whether New York or London would get the higher mark. But were I a visitor from another planet, and my observations limited to the sidewalks of New York, I should certainly report, on returning, that the human race was far from beautiful to look at as a visible phenomenon, however beautiful the invisible ideal of it, as worshipped by the humanists, might be on its own ground. I should report that Nature, who seems so careful of beauty when fashioning the birds and the flowers, had been singularly careless of it when fashioning these faces, but seemed, rather, to have been trying all the possible permutations and combinations of two eyes, a nose and a mouth. And I should add that the more I studied the faces on the sidewalks the more I admired the

flowers in the shop windows. I have seen no flower shops to compare with those of New York, though the beauty shops are more numerous.

In a discussion of the various types of countenance among civilized human beings, I once heard an artist maintaining that they could all be reduced to two—the “predatory” and the “churchgoing.” This classification, when first I heard of it, seemed to me nonsense, though the man who made it was completely in earnest. But the faces I have studied on the sidewalks of New York fall quite easily into the two categories; at all events I can think of none more useful in recording my impressions. Unquestionably the predatory type is predominant and represented among the men by an enormous number of specimens. The churchgoing type is rare, both among men and women. Most of the men’s faces are bleached, colourless, and give the impression of being partially cooked, or parboiled—an effect probably due to the heated atmosphere indoors. But the jaw is square and the carriage upright and vigorous. Heavy jowls are common and there is generally a good breadth of beam in the lower works. Altogether a suitable equipment, at least in appearance, for a predacious “attitude towards life.” As to the women, most of their faces are so extensively overlaid with colouring matter and otherwise sophisticated that it is hard to say what lies beneath. As reconstructed by the beauty shops their appearance

inclines to be predatory—an effect much favoured in those artistic establishments. But I strongly suspect that many of these predatory female faces, if washed in good soap and water, would revert to the churchgoing. Whether the disguise is an advantage from the æsthetic point of view I do not profess to judge; but, for my part, I am all for the soap and water, if only because it would help me to understand better what sort of a world I am living in.

An English resident of ten years' standing recently informed me that "of all cities on the earth" New York was the most delightful to live in. Questioned as to whether the thought of England was ever followed by a whiff of nostalgia my expatriated informant answered, most emphatically, "No." And this happened on the very day when I had called New York "a hell of a city" in the conversation reported above.

My informant, I found, was a member of the faculty of Columbia University, an immense body of some 3,000 men and women, mostly living in proximity one to another on the high region overlooking the Hudson River. This region is delightful; the air invigorating, the light pure, the elevation sufficient, the outlook spacious, the noise hushed, the crowd thinned, the stench of gasoline and the smoke of burnt oil effectually dispersed by the circumambient winds. Both the intellectual and the physical atmosphere are

highly vitalized. Wealth, though prominent, is not insolent and poverty almost invisible. Music and the drama, good company and brilliant conversation are always at hand. Splendid libraries and collections of art—mostly European or Asiatic in origin—are within reach. Invited to dinner or lunch you will find the decorations of the table perfect, and the presence of vitamins duly considered in the viands offered you. Moreover the cemeteries are well out of sight, unless the tomb of General Grant (with a gas-tank in the background) can be reckoned a cemetery. And for the satisfaction of your moral part you will find that every one you meet is active in remedying one or other of the world's innumerable evils, correcting its false philosophies, putting the art of salesmanship on a scientific basis, extending the international mind and generally making war on the realm of Chaos and Old Night. Even the realm of Chaos and Old Night, when viewed in this atmosphere, begins to look like a beneficent institution, since without it there would be nothing to make war upon and Dr. Fosdick's magnificent church would be unnecessary. In short, most things in this delightful place remind you of heaven and hardly anything of hell. You might compass the wide earth without finding anywhere a place where urbanity has produced a fairer flower. Such is the other side.

For raising a doubt as to whether this world is God's or the devil's, what city is like unto New

York? What country is like unto America? Let this be considered by those who maintain that New York is not an American city.

In his admirable book, *The Epic of America*, Mr. James Truslow Adams tells us of a Frenchman who said that what struck him most in New York was "the way that everyone of every sort looks you right in the eyes without a thought of inequality." This is a highly appropriate remark to make in the land of liberty. But my own experience, when mingling with the crowd, is quite different. Far from finding that everybody looks me "right in the eye," I find that nobody looks at me at all, or seems to have the faintest awareness of my existence except as a moving object to be avoided if I happen to get in his way. My relationships with the crowd and the crowd's with me are on the level of *things* rather than persons. Certainly there is "no thought of inequality" in their bearing towards me, for the simple reason that we all stand together on a level where conscious inequalities can hardly arise, and where the equality that exists, that of things, is not thought of either, because equality on that level is not worth thinking about. No doubt if I were to stop one of these moving objects and ask the way to Brooklyn Bridge he would look me "right in the eyes" when giving his answer, but not more directly than a Londoner under similar conditions. He might even go farther and address me in succession as "general," "cap-

tain," "boss" and "brother," as, indeed, happened to me not long ago when making the very inquiry I have just mentioned. But this mixture of terms seems to indicate that he regards me, not as a person of equal importance with himself, but as a person of no importance whatsoever.

Whether the equality which consists in bringing all men down to the zero level of value makes a good foundation for democracy is a question on which I have often meditated both on the sidewalks and in the subways at the rush hour, where my status as a thing is even more obvious than on the sidewalks and, I may add, distinctly unpleasant. I am inclined to think the foundation is a bad one, and in this many of my American friends agree with me. New York, they tell me, is not peculiar in this respect. The crowding in great cities has the same tendency everywhere—that of cheapening humanity and making human beings of little value in each other's eyes. "As you mingle with the crowd on the sidewalks," said one of them as we lunched together in the Faculty Club, "you get the impression that all of us, like the cars in the roadways and the goods in the shop-windows have been turned out from a mass production factory, men and things boiled up together into a seething chaos called 'traffic' or 'business'—with over-production going on all round, the supply exceeding the demand for human beings as well as for commodities, and a consequent fall of values in both departments. But surely," he

added, "an Englishman need not come to New York to get that impression." "No," I replied, "but I have never got it so intensely anywhere else."

The impression of human mass production is deepened by the painted faces of the women. There is doubtless a reason for this fashion in the fact that the beauty of woman has a short life in New York. It is a flower that grows abundantly and withers soon. But the effect of restoring it in this manner is to bring it down from the high estate of the Creator's masterpiece to the level of the artificial flowers in Woolworth's shop-windows. Whether the fashion is to be reckoned among the luxuries or the necessities of life I must leave to be answered by those who understand the distinction better than I do. I have only to record the feeling, often left by my sidewalk excursions, that I have been moving in a world largely peopled with dolls; and I observe that "well dolled" and "dolled up" have now become common terms in these latitudes for describing a phenomenon for which "well dressed" would have sufficed in a simpler age. This, I think, is somewhat of an offset to the conspicuously high status of women in the United States. As seen on the sidewalks they suggest mass production.

Your New York is certainly a great leveller. But in which direction? The same statement may be made and the same question asked in every American city.

## CHAPTER V

### AMERICA, THE SELF-CRITICAL

*Richmond, Virginia.*

I HAVE been here two days and am already conscious of the difference I expected between the north and the south. To begin with, it is hot enough (December 20) for an English summer, whereas in Baltimore, a few days ago, the cold pierced one to the bones. Paradoxically I caught cold as soon as I entered the warmer climate; a phenomenon which may be left to the consideration of the medical profession, in the hope that it may hasten their long delayed discovery of a cure for the malady in question. I am also conscious of a distinct, but not parallel, change in the human climate. The crowds in the street are less animated and seem not so uniformly well fed; the noises are less overwhelming; voices softer; manners less positive; even the cars scream and yell at each other less fiercely, though this may be a fancy and due rather to their being fewer in number than better mannered.

I have spent a day sightseeing, mostly of scenes and things connected with the Civil War, the battlefields of the neighbourhood, the Confederate

White House, now converted into a museum of war relics (tragic enough), and I have also paid my respects to the statues in the city, raising my hat to Lee, the greatest General the war produced, and again to Stonewall Jackson who might have been as great as Lee but for the shot, fired by mistake, which laid him low at Chancellorville.

On the whole the statues of the southern generals strike me as a more satisfactory type of military memorial than those of their northern opponents. With some exceptions the northern generals are represented in attitudes too heroic to be really impressive, too defiant, too ostentatiously out for blood and thunder, too self-consciously bent on giving the enemy hell, too evidently inviting the passer-by to come and see them do it. One feels inclined to be sorry for these poor generals solidified for all time in attitudes which no man could maintain for more than a few seconds without making himself ridiculous. The southern generals sit their horses with greater dignity and seem rather to be thinking out the strategy of a campaign than heading a charge on the cannon's mouth. Lee, you reflect, might spend an eternity just as he is, thinking out his campaign, or Beauregard<sup>1</sup> in remembering Charleston, but neither Sherman nor Sheridan could spend eternity in giving the enemy hell. Had I nothing but statues to go by, my sympathies would be unreservedly on the side

<sup>1</sup> In Charleston.

of the south. Such at least was my feeling to-day as I took my walk in Monument Avenue.

Not that all Richmond's statues can be spoken of in these terms. There is one dreadful thing hard by the State House—a statue of Washington mounted on a great rearing horse, its hind feet perilously glued to the edge of a pedestal, its forefeet furiously pawing the air, while Washington up above is hurling thunderbolts at the foe. Your first impulse on seeing it is to rush forward and catch the Father of his Country as he falls, for you feel instinctively that if the rearing horse moves but a hair's breadth the whole contraption will come down with a crash. Thanks to the good cement under the horse's feet the catastrophe has so far been averted, but its imminence is apparent to everybody. In my haste I suggested to some Richmond friends that a charge of dynamite would be well expended on this statue, and was reassured, after so venturesome a remark, to find they agreed with me. They didn't like it, they said; it should never have been placed where it is, and never would have been but for some political hanky-panky, the story of which I have forgotten.

This afternoon I fell into conversation with a southern lady, staying in the hotel, about these old, unhappy far-off things, more particularly about the Civil War. She corrected me when I called it by that name and said that I should speak of it as "the War between the States."

She then told me the well-known story of the exceeding bitterness in the south which followed the war, how it was inflamed by the abominations of "reconstruction" in the years immediately succeeding; how the feeling had subsided among the children of the southern combatants, meant little to their grandchildren, and to the great grandchildren nothing at all. "All the same," she went on, "we put up a great fight; we suffered to the last dregs of our endurance, and fired our last cartridge before we gave in. Yes, *sir*, we're proud of it!" Struck by her use of the pronoun "we," I ventured to ask her with some hesitation, "And you, the granddaughter of a combatant, would you call yourself a Confederate now?" "You *bet* I would!" came the swift answer, and there was a notable flash in her grey eyes.

Our talk then turned on England. I had not seen the English papers for some time, and was not very well posted on the latest developments in the political line or on what this statesman or that had recently been saying. She, on the contrary, was able to give me the news from England up to date. Then she proceeded to put me through a rather severe examination in my political leanings and principles, gold standard and all. What did I think of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, Lord Snowden, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. Lloyd George? She had opinions about each of these, more incisive than mine and

remarkably well informed, and I wondered how far I should have to travel at home before finding an English lady who knew as much about the cabinet ministers in Washington. Finally she broke out into expressions of admiration which, from the way they were delivered, I think were genuine. "My! you British are a great people. Just great! You're an example to the whole world. Yes, *sir!* An example to the whole world!" I asked her an example of what?—for I was by no means as confident on the point as she was. "An example of how to grasp the nettle," she answered, "that's just what our politicians can't do—or rather daren't do. Yes, *sir*; the British are great: and they let you know it when they're fighting with their backs to the wall, though they don't show it till then."

Then she broke out into a lamentation over American politicians, which differed from many others I have heard on the same subject from American women. It ran somewhat as follows.

"Do you know how we fight Presidential elections? I'll tell you. Both parties begin about a year before the election by boosting the big things they're going to stand for. But as the election draws nearer these big questions begin to be shelved, because each party feels it is certain to lose votes if it touches them one way or another, either for or against. Take prohibition, for example. Both parties are talking big about it now—the Republicans mostly for, the Democrats

against. When the election comes near neither party will dare to say which way it stands, because of the votes it would lose if it did. Same with the other big things, debts, tariffs, League of Nations and all the rest—don't commit the party either way but say it must be considered after the election, so that when the election comes there's nothing left that's worth voting about. It's a choice between Log and Dog. The fear of losing votes—that and graft are the only motives that count with our politicians."

I said I didn't believe her, but she took no notice and went on: "Once we Americans thought we were the great example to the world; we ought to be; but we're not. We are—" but I am not going to record the bitter remark about her country which followed, for I think it unjust. I was much cheered by what she said about mine, and it fell upon my ear the more pleasingly because of the soft southern accent in which it was spoken. But the bitter remark she wound up with set me thinking. I will try to write down my thoughts.

As a people the Americans are the most self-critical on the face of the earth. They are much addicted to painting their own portrait. Along with a profound and exultant sense of achievement there goes, at least among the thoughtful, a sense of uncertainty as to what it is all worth, and even a lurking doubt as to whether it is worth any-

thing. The American is often vociferous in these exultations and his vociferations sometimes give offence to foreigners. But if you hear him out to the end of his amazing story you will often find reason to suspect that vociferation is a means he adopts to stifle a doubt, even a dread, lest the whole fabric of achievement he has been describing should suddenly collapse and come to nothing. He is like the Englishman who had to pass a cemetery on his way to business and, being subject to melancholy thoughts and susceptible to the influence of tombstones, made a regular practice of singing "Rule Britannia" to keep up his courage when he came to that dismal part of the walk. The American may often be met with, especially among the less educated, for whom the proposition that the Americans are the Lord's elect and America God's own country are the most certain truths in the universe; but these boasters are invariably rebuked when they become vocal in presence of the more educated and apologies made for them afterwards to the foreigner who has overheard their boastings, or to whom perhaps they have been rather pointedly addressed—this last being regarded by the well-bred as an intolerable breach of good manners.

The boastings still go on and tend to increase as one travels westward, reaching their peak, I think, in California, though everywhere greatly moderated both in pitch and volume by the prevailing economic depression (1931). But in

this respect as in so many others America is a land of contrasts. Nowhere else is national self-criticism practised with a severity so relentless and a mockery so bitter. In New York there is a group of brilliant intellectuals who practise it as a profession, which assumes at times the character of a sour pastime, though one in which the visitor is not expected to take part. Outside the circles of these professional Jeremiahs thoughtful people are to be met with all over the country whose minds seem to be constantly exercised in the diagnosis of the national diseases, and whose speech drops into a minor key as they discuss "the future of the country"—so many and grave are the "problems" yet remaining to be solved. I listened not long ago to a sermon preached by a distinguished orator in the Chapel of a great university, in which the picture of American follies and sins was painted in colours so dark that one almost expected the sermon to conclude, not with the benediction, but with the crack of doom. Most of what one is accustomed to hear from unfriendly critics of America, even the most unkind, was here repeated with staggering illustrations from current events. "God's own country" indeed! If half of what the preacher said was true—I believed less than half myself—the owner of the country is certainly not God, but Someone Else. I inquired of a professor afterwards if this kind of sermon was common in the university pulpit? He replied, "We get more

of that kind than any other." The "hope" of which America is said to be the land is tempered with many misgivings.

If you ask your American friends to explain this orgy of national self-criticism—though you had better not describe it in those terms—they will probably tell you that the Americans are a young people and naturally self-conscious. This answer, which I have heard in many other connexions, never impressed me. The Americans are really a very old people and though they make a show of despising tradition are as tightly in the grip of tradition as the British, and more so at certain points. But as a people they are not fond of history—Mr. Ford calls it "bunk"—they dislike looking backward (except in the matter of their own pedigrees), they enjoy looking forward; they are great predictors of the future, so that if you want to know what the "future of religion" is to be, a hundred American books will give you the answer, or rather a hundred answers, all different; above everything they are devoted to whatever can be called modern, a word that acts upon their minds like an enchanter's spell. But, as M. Bergson says, if we want to find out what people really think, we must attend not to what they say but to what they do. Judging the American in this way you will find—and perhaps it is a point in his favour—that his mentality betrays at many points a reversion to an earlier stage of human evolution. But not being

historically minded, nor historically very well informed, he often mistakes his reverions for advances and proclaims as "modern" some old idea or practice which was tried out long ago and found wanting—companionate marriage, for example, which is new only in name. This may explain that "childlike" quality which some observers profess to have found in the American character. Perhaps a better name for it would be forgetfulness. The Americans are as old as the rest of us, but they have forgotten how old they are, much older certainly than the Declaration of Independence. M. André Siegfried shortens the perspective unduly when he describes America as a country which has recently "come of age." Mr. James Truslow Adams, in his *Epic of America*, gives a truer conception of her antiquity. When Americans possess the historical sense, as Mr. Adams does, they are pretty sure to possess it in a high degree.

No; the American habit of self-criticism is not explained by the youthfulness of the nation. It springs in part from the doubts and fears I spoke of among those who feel they are standing on too giddy a height or travelling at a speed beyond the limits of safety; for be it noted that Americans with all their adventurous pioneerings are greatly devoted to the motto "Safety first," their high protection system, their dislike of entangling alliances, their refusal to enter the League of Nations, to say nothing of the multitude of their

aseptic precautions in eating, drinking and washing, or of the legend I have seen at street crossings, "Safety or suicide," all betokening their solicitude to keep America "safe." No wonder. It is the most dangerous country in the world.

Strange it is how the human mind reacts upon itself, even to the point of becoming frightened at its own courage. For it is one thing to be courageous—a fighting bull may be that—and quite another thing to be conscious how courageous you are—a discovery which has been known to have the effect of turning a brave man into a coward on the spot.<sup>1</sup> America is the land where these reactions, shared in some degree by all peoples, may be studied in their most sudden and violent forms. The swing of the pendulum between the point where you do a thing and the point where you criticize yourself for doing it is more rapid in America than elsewhere. The swing from one extreme to another—as, say, from Modernism to Fundamentalism—which takes a moment elsewhere (as history counts time) takes only half a moment in America.

And there is another cause. With the Declaration of Independence was born the idea that the mission of America was to set a good example to the world of liberty and its fruits, and surely it was a laudable ambition. The political utterances of Thomas Jefferson are full of this idea and a thousand instances of it could be culled

<sup>1</sup> Compare Hamlet, "Conscience makes cowards of us all."

from American oratory of all periods. When Dickens first visited the country in 1843 he seized upon this immediately, and of course caricatured it. It struck me also very forcibly on my first visit in 1886 and there are frequent notes on it, with youthful comments of my own (quite worthless) in the records I kept at the time. No doubt it still survives, but very feebly, if at all, among the people whom it has been my lot to encounter in this year of disillusion.

The part of a deliberate example-setter is difficult to play for nations as for individuals. The Americans have had their share of the disappointments that invariably attend it. They, or at least the leaders of thought among them, are disappointed to-day not because the other nations have failed to follow their example but because they feel the example itself has deteriorated. Sometimes they seek relief for their feelings by propaganda directed against misdoings of other nations, such as the iniquities of British rule in India, (a question which very few of them even faintly understand, though they will lecture you on it by the hour), or by reminding us of the war we waged to compel the Chinese to accept the opium traffic, a handy and rather effective stick to beat us with. But oftener they vent their disappointment on themselves. Along with their concern for crime, lawlessness and political corruption as domestic evils goes a bitter feeling that they are setting a bad example to the rest of the world. It is a feeling that

touches American pride at its tenderest point. It accounts for much in the national self-criticism of America. The note of it may often be detected in the more dignified quarters of the Press and in the other literature to which I have alluded.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AMERICAN INTELLIGENTSIA

"Sure enough, America is a great, and in many respects a blessed and hopeful phenomenon. Sure enough these hardy millions of Anglo-Saxon men prove themselves worthy of their genealogy ; and with axe and plough and hammer, if not yet with any much finer kind of implements, are triumphantly clearing out wide spaces, seedfields for the sustenance and refuge of mankind, arenas for the future history of the world, doing, in their day and generation, a creditable and cheerful thing under the sun. But as to a Model Republic, or a model anything, the wise among themselves know too well that there is nothing to be said. . . . No ; America, too, will have to strain its energies, in quite other fashion than this ; to crack its sinews and all-but break its heart, as the rest of us have had to do, in thousand-fold wrestle with the Pythons and mud-demons, before it can become a habitation for the gods. America's battle is still to fight."

THOMAS CARLYLE: *The Present Time*, 1850.

*Washington.*

DEMOCRACY at large has often been charged, and by none more vehemently than by Thomas Carlyle, with failure to attract the service, in political office, of the best minds. The humiliations of vote catching, the arts of deceptive manœuvre, the atmosphere of intrigue in which democratic politics are prone to become involved, either keep the best minds at a distance or tend to expel them when admitted. Democracy is thus confronted with a difficulty, possibly with a

dilemma. Plato wrestled with it in vain and it has never been satisfactorily resolved. By its nature democracy demands the official service, at least as an ingredient, of the very best minds the nation can produce, and at the same time creates conditions, partly moral, which tend to deprive it of that service. These conditions are present everywhere, but it is in America, I think, that they are most conspicuous.

Whatever wisdom there may be in making philosophers kings it is certainly not desirable that a great nation should be ruled exclusively by its intelligentsia. On the other hand the participation of the intelligentsia is highly important as an ingredient in government. A government from which the intelligentsia habitually holds aloof lacks something that it needs for its proper effectiveness. Between a government in which the intelligentsia bears all the weight of responsibility and one in which it bears none it were hard to choose which is the less likely to govern wisely.

The American intelligentsia is large in numbers, high in quality, diversified in attainment, and occupied in an immense variety of good works. But, as a body, it abstains from direct participation in the work of national government. It leaves that work to be done by other men who, whatever other qualifications they possess, lack those which characterize an intelligentsia. This, of course, is not to say that the members of the Administration,

or of Congress, are lacking in intellect; for a man may possess a powerful intellect, as Lincoln did, and yet be outside the ranks of the intelligentsia and even inclined (as Lincoln certainly was not) to regard its contribution to public affairs as "bunk."

The consequence is that the American Government carries on with little direct assistance from those elements which represent the finest fruit of education. These, as I have said, are to be found, and found in abundance, actively and beneficently engaged in other walks of life. Indirect influence on the doings of their government they doubtless have, but even this does not appear to be very great. They also furnish the government with expert service as required. But they do not govern.

An intelligentsia, in virtue of its historical sense, of which more will be presently said, is too long-sighted to deal effectively with issues that are of passing or temporary importance. On the other hand, a government in whose composition the intelligentsia forms no part is too short-sighted to deal with the long-run of events and is likely, therefore, to sacrifice the greater interests of the future to the lesser interests of the present. Its policy will be characteristically short-sighted, though, perhaps, effective enough for present purposes. American policy has often shown that quality.

There are, of course, exceptions to the general

rule, of which the most notable is the late Mr. Woodrow Wilson. Mr. Wilson unquestionably belonged to the intelligentsia. He was long-sighted—essentially “a forward-looking man.” But the tragedy which closed his career, due to his imperfect vision of momentary issues, suggests that his case should be cited as an exception that proves the rule. It seems to have acted rather as a warning to the American intelligentsia in general than as an example they are inclined to follow. He was succeeded, it may be noted, by President Harding.

The qualities which differentiate the intellect of an intelligentsia from intellect of other kinds are not easy to define. But they may all be summarized as a grasp on the importance of *history*—knowledge of its contents, regard for its teachings and skill in their application to present conditions. This does not mean that the intelligentsia knows nothing but history, or that a member of it cannot be a specialist in other departments, such as engineering, medicine or finance. It means, rather, that whatever knowledge he possesses will be deepened, illuminated and rendered more applicable to life by his knowledge of the past, out of which the facts known have come to be what they are and acquired the power to become different in the future. He will know facts, not as things that are simply *there*, but as things *in process of change*. He will know them dynamically. His knowledge will thus have

not only a background, but also a foreground, to which the background is intimately related. Mr. Wilson was clearly of this type, a student of history and a man endowed with the historical sense. But when Mr. Henry Ford, also a man of powerful intellect, declares that "history is bunk," he puts himself definitely outside the ranks of the intelligentsia. Men of Mr. Ford's type of intellect are common in American politics. Men of Mr. Wilson's type are rare.

Lack of the historical sense is commonly said to be the weak point of the American mentality in general. I am not so sure of this. It would be true, perhaps, if history consisted only of what is written in books and if the historical sense, in consequence, were based on nothing but book-knowledge; but not true if the historical sense betokens a feeling for the dynamic urge in human affairs and a general habit of thinking in terms of *time*. In this latter meaning, I think the lack of it may be fairly cited as a weak point of American politicians.

The same considerations apply, though in a minor degree, to the American aristocracy, which must never be confused with the intelligentsia. That America has an aristocracy is sufficiently evident to all observers who have more than a superficial acquaintance with the country, an aristocracy constituted, it is true, on lines differently drawn from those of older countries, and differently drawn in different parts of the

Union, that of the east, for example, being mainly composed by descendants of the earlier settlers, that of the west by the descendants of the pioneers —the latter less fully grown than the former but in process of growth. Surrounded by hosts of recent immigrants who threaten to swamp them, and less protected by tradition than the aristocracies of Europe, the American varieties, for that very reason, are the more careful to protect themselves. Hence, the more conscious of itself as an *élite* any one of them becomes, the more it is indisposed to bathe in the turbid waters of political life. It must be remembered, also, that the sons of the American aristocracy are more amply provided with possible careers than are their European counterparts, the latter being traditionally limited to three or four, of which the service of the State is the chief. In view, therefore, of the lower status of politics in the American perspective it is not surprising that the aristocracy show a tendency to join the intelligentsia in avoiding them. The exceptions, however, are more numerous. The Roosevelt family, one of the oldest in America, may be cited as notable.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RHODES SCHOLARS

The Rhodes Scholarships were established in 1903, and in 1928 755 American Rhodes Scholars had passed through the University of Oxford. All these were highly selected men, selected on grounds of character as well as intellectual ability and achievement. They may be said to represent the cream of the American men's colleges.

What, one naturally asks, have they done since returning to their country? What careers have they chosen? What positions have they attained? What services have they rendered?

An answer to these questions can be found in an article by Dr. Charles Franklin Thwing, President Emeritus of the Western Reserve University at Cleveland, published in the *Hibbert Journal* for January, 1933.

From Dr. Thwing's account it appears that many of the earlier Rhodes Scholars have already attained positions of high eminence and responsibility in various professions and callings—in education, law, medicine, physical and other sciences, and in the ministry of religion; while

many others of later date are rapidly ascending the ladder which the earlier ones have already climbed to the top. On the whole they are fulfilling the expectations natural to the case of men so highly selected, the "cream," as I have said, of the American men's colleges. But with one notable exception. According to Dr. Thwing's account it would appear that *not one of them has found a career in the national politics of his country*. Not one is to be found in Congress, either as a Senator or a Member of the House of Representatives. It is plain that the political career does not attract them.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of his article Dr. Thwing defines the effects which their Oxford education has had on the Rhodes Scholars. If I am right in what has been said in the last Chapter about the intellectual quality distinctive of an intelligentsia, it will be seen that Dr. Thwing's considered account brings the Scholars under that denomination. He says:

"The Rhodes men brought back a special point of view for the study of any subject put

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thwing, in correspondence on this point, from which he kindly permits me to quote, gives the following reasons why Rhodes Scholars have not entered the field of Federal Legislation :

1. They are not party men.
2. In America, entrance into political life comes later than in England. The oldest of the Rhodes Scholars can be little more than fifty years of age.
3. The need of earning a living. The Rhodes Scholars, as a class, are comparatively poor.
4. Lack of sympathy with the personalities composing the rank and file of the Republican and Democratic parties.

before them. This point of view was the historical one. They were, by the Oxford teaching of any subject, impressed with the duty of examining each question in the light of its origin, of its subsequent development, and of its whole further history. . . . Historical thoroughness was the condition of the scholastic atmosphere, and might be said to constitute even the method of study. The history of a subject was made a far more evident purpose than controls in American colleges.

“ From such a ruling purpose, method and condition there came to these Scholars a breadth of mind, a breadth of thinking, a breadth of interpretation of the richest worth. They became scholars and thinkers. A scholarly maturity possessed and ruled them. In this breadth they became intellectually patient. Tolerance was added to other intellectual and to athletic qualities. They were made willing to listen to interpretations and to weigh arguments opposed to their pre-suppositions. They saw and felt that what we call the truth has an infinite number of sides.

“ With this increasing breadth there went along a new power of intellectual concentration. These men found in themselves a quality of being able to throw all that there was in them of intellectual endowment into the doing of a specific task. If their thinking became broader, it also became a thinking to a point and a type of hard thinking. . . .

"The contradictions of depth and of breadth were indeed reconciled in the Oxford training."

The Rhodes Scholars are indeed but a small fraction of the American intelligentsia; but they represent it at a high and fairly even level; they represent it, moreover, at the stage of youth. If a group had to be formed of the most promising young men the country produces it would be hard to form a more promising group than they. Even, therefore, if it stood alone as an instance of abstention from the political career on the part of highly educated men it would possess considerable significance. But it does not stand alone.

The English traveller whose good fortune it is to make contacts with the finer types of American men and women, whom he will find without difficulty in any city great or small where he happens to be staying, cannot fail to be struck by their attitude towards national politics and to the career of the politician. It varies from the negatives of indifference and aloofness, to the positives of hatred and contempt. He will find that these fine people, though staunchly believing in the principles of their constitution and loyal admirers of Washington and Lincoln, have little respect for those who represent the nation in Congress and will often speak of that body with sorrow, and sometimes with indignation, as misrepresenting America before the eyes of the world. They will admit that the elements of the national life represented by Congress are real and

backed by enormous voting power; but, so much the worse, they will say, for it is a power of ignorance rather than wisdom and private interest rather than public spirit. While not going the length of asserting that the elements represented in Congress are the worst, they will tell you emphatically that they are nearer the worst than the best. Whatever the political career may be in the ideal, they feel that, as politics go in America, it is no career for a man who values his intellectual integrity. When told (as I have sometimes ventured to say) that by holding aloof in this manner they perpetuate the conditions they deplore, they will reply by describing the repulsive experiences to which a man of high calibre would find himself exposed even if he succeeded in forcing his way into politics against the all-powerful machinery that guards the entrance, a thing mostly impossible and an odious experience in any case. If finally you point to Lincoln as a man in the highest rank of human greatness who rose to be head of the political State, the answer will be that Lincoln's nomination to the Presidency was the result of an accident not likely to be repeated, and that his heroic spirit happened to be encased in the skin of a rhinoceros. In writing these sentences I am recording the substance of many conversations with the American intelligentsia.

This attitude towards politics and the politician, varying, as I say, from indifference to aversion,

is not unknown in other democratic countries; one finds it, for example, in the blazing contempt of Carlyle for the British Parliament as it functioned in his day. But, as characteristic of the educated classes in general, the American exhibition of it seems to be unique; and this is the more remarkable since the American form of democracy, as Alexander Hamilton saw (though perhaps Jefferson did not) is the one which, of all others, demands the leadership of the best minds the country can produce. Certainly the American colleges, in which, presumably, the finest specimens of the nation's youth are gathered, have no parallel to offer to the type of young man familiar in Oxford—the type represented, say, by the young Gladstone or Asquith—who, after winning the highest university distinction, proceed to find their vocation in national politics; nor could the British universities produce a parallel to the abstention from politics revealed by the record of the Rhodes Scholars.

For social service in other forms and aspects there is no lack of enthusiasm among the picked youth of America, whether Rhodes Scholars or not. My impression is that the spirit of social service, as a general ideal, is more active in American colleges than in British. I have heard or read the allocutions of many college presidents addressed to the graduating classes at the annual "Commencements," but never one in which

“social service” was not stressed as the duty America expected her sons and daughters to do in return for the education she had given them. In spite of all this the American intelligentsia remains, on the whole, self-excluded from the political life of the nation. The best minds of America are not in politics and if, exceptionally, one of them, overcoming his aversions, enters the field as a candidate for high office, the political machine is apt to eject him.

This state of things would be the more intelligible, and perhaps less tragic, if minds of the highest order were rarely to be met with and only a few of them were available for the service of the State. But, as every traveller of wide experience will bear witness, they are not rare. They are to be met with, in astonishing numbers, in all the professions. And not least conspicuously in business; for though American business, like business everywhere else, has its hordes of practitioners who could hardly be numbered among the stars of any galaxy, you will not have far to go before your orbit will be crossed by some business man whom you would name, not unfitly, “industrial hero” or “industrial saint,” or perhaps both. But you will have much farther to go before you meet such types in politics, except, it may be, in the persons of rejected candidates. America is singularly rich in the human material which might produce political leadership of the highest order. The

tragedy is that it does not lead. And the tragedy goes deep for America and for the whole world. Great as America is, it is her own doing that she is not greater. Her "resources" are vaster than she knows and not always what she thinks they are.

The argument is sometimes used by Americans that the abstention of the intelligentsia from national politics increases the amount of first-class talent available for forms of social service other than the political, and that this, in a country which "needs very little government," is not only natural but desirable. Doubtless there is weight in the argument, but many considerations must be borne in mind before the exact force of it can be estimated. Even if it be true that America "needs very little government," is it not equally true that, being what she is, she needs that little of the very best? And may it not be added that whatever be the amount of government she needs (if such things are to be spoken in quantitative terms) the amount she actually gets, as judged by the output of legislation, is astonishingly large?

From which the conclusion would seem to be that precisely because America needs very little government she also needs the wisest of legislators, if only to know where legislation ought to stop. For a wise legislature is known, not by the multitude of the laws that it makes and by its passion for making more and ever more, but rather by putting a curb on its own law-making

tendency and by limiting the contents of its statute book to what is strictly necessary and effective—a reminder which might well be addressed to legislative assemblies all over the world. For it is a standing delusion in democratic societies that all goods are attainable and all evils curable by appropriate Acts of Parliament, and the elected representatives, if only on the principle of giving their constituents a run for their money, are not slow to play up to the delusion by turning out as many laws as they can think of. Are they not all in the habit of justifying their existence, when called to the bar of public opinion, by citing the number they have made and by pandering to their misguided constituents by promises of more to be made in the future ? Just as a wise man is said to be known not only by the words he utters, but equally and perhaps more by the words he refrains from uttering, so a wise legislature is known not only by the laws it makes but equally and perhaps more by the laws it refrains from making—and especially when under strong popular pressure to make them.

An example is again afforded by Prohibition. Without prejudice to the question whether Prohibition is a wise law or an unwise, it is obvious that a legislature on which pressure has been brought to make such a law, must be endowed with high wisdom in deciding its merits and with exceptional courage in refusing to make it if wisdom decides it to be unwise. It is precisely

when questions of this kind arise that the abstention of the American *intelligentsia* from the political career seems most unfortunate, and the doubt arises whether the setting free of high talent for other forms of service is an adequate compensation for the loss of their service at the national headquarters. Admitting that America needs very little government it by no means follows from this that the little she does need can be safely left to minds short of the best the nation can produce. Ought we not to infer the contrary?

If America were as self-contained and as independent of the rest of the world as she traditionally aspires to be and as the masses of the people have been encouraged to believe she is, the loss she suffers from the cause I have been discussing, though still great, would be less. The American *intelligentsia* know very well at what rate to value the popular myth of America's independence of the rest of the world. Even if they think, as some of them do, that America's entanglements with the rest of the world should be kept at a minimum, and avoided altogether in certain fields, they yet see clearly that this minimum is composed of priceless imponderabilia and demands the wisest handling.

As the student of modern civilization waits for the impenetrable veil which hangs over the future to become transparent, the two countries on which he should concentrate his watch are, unquestion-

ably, Russia and the United States of America. Both are the homes of vast and varied populations whose total numbers are near enough to equality one with the other to afford a basis for comparison. Both are the scenes of social experimentation on an enormous scale, and the fate of our civilization will probably be determined according as either of them succeeds or fails. The two experiments, indeed, are in opposite directions; the Russian in the direction of the maximum of social regimentation, the American (in theory at least) in the direction of the minimum. That Russia is in the experimental stage few will deny; that America should be so, after a century and half of national existence, may seem at first sight to be a statement contradicted by history. But it has to be remembered that the founders of the Republic were, in the main, men of the Anglo-Saxon tradition legislating for a relatively small community of like tradition with themselves. They had no foresight, and could have none, of the immensely different conditions to which the Republic would have to adapt itself in these latter days. They had no foresight of the enormous increase in the number of the population, of the variety of its elements and the diversity of its interests; none of the tides of foreign immigration and the swamping of the original strains by races gathered from the four corners of the earth; none of the liberation of the slaves and their rapid increase from three million to twelve; none of the progress of

scientific invention and the social transformation which followed it. They aimed, and perhaps wisely, at an America free from political entanglements with the rest of the world; but how could they foresee the coming of a time when the course of events (which pays no heed to the intentions of statesmen) would have entangled the economic life of America with that of every nation on the face of the earth and by that entanglement rendered her "*Munro doctrine*" a thing of little significance? If, *per impossibile*, we imagine America beginning her life as a nation in the condition in which she is to-day, and from the point where she now stands, can we conceive the new founders adopting the principles, ideals, hopes and methods which governed the old founders in 1775? I think it inconceivable.

Perhaps the same question asked in respect of any democratic nation would have to be answered, with more or less hesitation, in a similar manner. Are not all of them experimenting with the possibility of adapting old principles to new conditions? Do they not all share with Russia the character of being in the experimental stage? And is the outcome of their experiment any more assured than the outcome of hers? Faith may answer in the affirmative, as she would do if the converse question were addressed to a Russian communist, but in the one case as in the other reason will reserve her judgment.

It is not only on the general ground of their

experimental condition that a parallel may be traced between the American and Russian situations. If in America the intelligentsia holds aloof from direct participation in national politics, through indifference or aversion, in Russia it has been forcibly expelled and to a large extent destroyed. Here indeed the difference between the two situations is great. But this amount of resemblance remains: that neither country can claim (Russia would not wish to claim it) that it is governed by the historically-minded. In the one case the intelligentsia is deliberately and violently excluded by the ruling power; in the other it holds aloof as a matter of preference; but in both cases the policy at headquarters shows the effects, for good or ill, that one might expect from its absence. Among the ill effects, or at least what most authorities in jurisprudence have reckoned such, is that neither government, when once possessed by the itch for law-making, knows where to stop. And this knowledge, according to the best authorities, is the touchstone of wisdom in government.

And yet there are great compensations. The American intelligentsia, unlike the Russian now destroyed, banished or reduced to penury, is not only in being, unshorn of its honours and prestige, but intensely active in a thousand forms. Now, whether or no it be true that the American people have less need of government than the others, there can be no doubt that they share to the

full in this common need of all nations for an *education* on lines at once saner and more comprehensive than the civilized world in general has yet had the wisdom to adopt. And may it not be that the aloofness of the intelligentsia from the political career has for its other side the devotion of the intelligentsia to this greater cause? Amid a welter of cross-currents so confused that analysis and prediction are alike impossible, signs are not wanting of a clear tendency among the intelligentia to place the claims of national re-education above all others—a tendency in which the money power itself, otherwise the most dangerous of America's internal foes, is becoming deeply involved. Perhaps it is the mission of the American intelligentsia to lead the world in that direction—the re-education of mankind—thereby setting an example which American politics have failed to set.

It is certain that our civilization is not long for this world unless some better method of saving it can be devised than that of making political alliances, or the counter method of abstaining from them. Nor is it clear that making economic alliances, or abstaining from them, will serve the turn very much better. The League of Nations? If the nations themselves are intrinsically not worth saving what more can a League of Nations do than bind them together in a common downfall? Short of reshaping the living substance, the human material, nothing can save it. "There

must be a new world, if there is to be any world at all." Where is the wise man who doubts it? Not in America. Unless my observations have gone astray these thoughts are stirring mightily in the best minds of that nation. Would it be strange, then, if the "great experiment" became, at last and essentially, an experiment in the re-education of mankind, a new attempt, on the only lines which promise success, to make good the claim of any nation to "need very little government"? To me it would not be strange. Profoundly mysterious as America's destinies are, most assuredly they are not written in the sentence which declares her "the richest nation on earth." "America's battle is still to fight."

## CHAPTER VIII

### AMERICA THE UNREAL

*Los Angeles, February, 1932.*

AMONG the uninformed there exists a belief that America is a land where matter is everywhere triumphant over spirit, a land of hard facts, rock bottoms, brass tacks and other insoluble entities, with a people to correspond. I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing insoluble about America except her "problems." At least I often have a feeling to that effect, which some psychologists might consider a religious experience, perhaps with as much reason as they have for classifying certain other queer sensations under that heading.

As I view the sights and hear the sounds of this country I feel at times that I am walking perilously on the edge of Nothing, that the touch of a passing angel's wing is all that is needed to precipitate the surrounding tumult, and me along with it, into the abyss of Nothingness, leaving only America's problems as solid facts, to testify that America once existed. In Los Angeles that feeling has come over me with a peculiar poignancy. On my communicating it to a friend in the city he suggested medical treatment, and named a local

physician with a leaning to psycho-therapy, who, he thought, could give me the right prescription. I replied that psycho-therapy seemed to me at the moment involved in the general blight of unreality. This, he said, took him out of his depth.

This feeling of nothingness has passed through three stages. It began, I think, in the neighbouring Hollywood, to which I have duly made my bow, and it came to maturity here in Los Angeles.

My first view of Hollywood was by night, and the night-view of Hollywood, when electricity is the light-bringer, is in a sense more brilliant than that by day when she has only the sun, a fainter luminary in American cities, to make her visible. As the scene unfolded I became conscious that I was in the presence of something essentially *feminine*, with a touch of the Oriental in her make-up and a Philistine lavishness in her garments. Astonishment overcame me, like that of the chorus in *Samson Agonistes* when Delilah emerges into view, and I found myself asking:

“But who is this, what thing of sea or land ?  
Female of sex it seems,  
That so bedecked, ornate and gay,  
Comes this way sailing,  
Like a stately ship  
Of Tarsus, bound for the isles  
Of Javan or Gadier,  
With all her bravery on and tackle trim,  
Sails filled and streamers waving  
Courted by all the winds that hold them play....  
Some rich Philistine matron she may seem.”

When I had finished the quotation my companion remarked, "The last line won't do for Hollywood. Not a 'matron' but a 'mistress.' And I imagine she has more lovers than one."

More exactly, the first or Hollywood stage of my approach to Nothing may be described by saying that it closely resembled the feeling one often has when looking at a beautiful woman, Philistine matron or other, who paints her face. For my part I should admire her more if she didn't; the feeling, therefore, is that of being deprived of something you have a right to expect, with the added resentment of having something forced upon you that you haven't asked for and don't want. If the woman were ugly a case might be made out for the painting; but since she is beautiful the adornment is superfluous and something of a nuisance. By putting it on she moves a little nearer to Nothing.

Now nature has unquestionably made Hollywood very beautiful. But catch an American leaving nature alone when once he gets her in his power! Not he! Lucky she if she escape conversion into "real estate" and division into marketable lots the moment he sets his eyes on her, a boom to-morrow and a slump next day. A landscape gardener whom I met in San Francisco told me that being called in to lay out the grounds surrounding a rich man's residence he advised him to leave them in their natural state. "They are beautiful enough as they are," he said.

“I don’t care a damn for what they *are*,” replied the millionaire, “I care only for what they *look like*. And they look as if I hadn’t a darned dollar to spend on them.” The consequence was that my informant was sent about his business and another expert called in who promptly performed an operation on the face of nature akin to that which beauty shops perform on the face of woman. This gave his patron complete satisfaction. Well, that is how Hollywood has been treated. If a city in a fine situation and with a lovely climate could be thought of as going to a beauty shop and having its face lifted, its fingers manicured, its eyebrows plucked, its hair set in permanent waves, its eyes made to glow with strange lights, the result would be a place like Hollywood. Of course it may be said that nature is made better by no means but nature makes those means. But what about the means that make nature *worse*? Does she make *them*? My metaphysical friends assure me that she does, and that I should be a dualist, or a Manichæan or some other kind of philosophical pariah if I thought otherwise. My answer is, I would rather be a dualist or a Manichæan or a philosophical pariah or even “a pagan suckled in a creed outworn” than believe that nature uses lipstick, or is responsible for Hollywood either by day or by night.

She is a portent and an astonishment, in direct succession from Delilah, the mistress of the Strong Man. When you first see her you say,

"Oh" (at least I did); and when you have seen all she has to show you, "Oh" will be sufficient to record your main impressions and to pay her your respects. In a sense there is nothing else to say. As Friday relates in *Robinson Crusoe*, "Oh" was all the savages said by way of adoration when they went up the mountain once a year to worship their great god, Benamuckee. Let us say "Oh" to Hollywood. Yet here, as in every city of America, even in the most gorgeous of her Babylons and the most wicked of her Gomorrahs, you will find, without having far to search, some of the best and most lovable people in the world. I have heard the same of the London slums.

Such was the first stage of my initiation into the unreality of America. The second stage was also reached at Hollywood. Suddenly, for no reason I can think of, the Lady of the Painted Face transformed herself into a ghost and a habitation of ghosts. I had gone with some friends to see a moving picture show in the gorgeous Chinese theatre. The piece was *Mata Hari* and the chief actors Greta Garbo and Ramon Navarro. As I watched the show, the theatre and the people in it gradually became, to my consciousness, insubstantial and shadowy, their substance seeming to transfer itself to the figures on the screen. Feeling rather uncomfortable in the company of so many ghosts, and half-suspecting that I might be a ghost myself, I slipped out during an interval, to smoke a cigar, take a turn or two in the street

outside, and so satisfy myself that I was still in this world. But in the street it was just the same. I saw phantoms everywhere, phantom crowds, phantom houses, phantom cars, phantom lights. Then, remembering Dr. Johnson, I struck my foot violently on the pavement, in the hope it would wake me from the dream. It did. On returning somewhat late to my seat in the theatre one of my friends asked me where I had been. "In the other world," I answered. "Which of them?" said my friend, "the one above or the one below?" "I don't know," I replied, "that question is difficult to answer in Hollywood." It was shortly after this that I was recommended to try psycho-therapy, though never in better health in my life.

The last stage, the plunge into absolute nothingness, where not even a ghost remained to disturb the peace of Nirvana, took place in Los Angeles itself, not far from this noise-wracked hotel. Perhaps the noise had something to do with it, for nowhere else has noise caused me so much agony, nowhere else have the foul screamings of the innumerable motors, the whistlings of the policemen, the nasal yells of the newsboys (to me quite unintelligible) and the incessant bang and crash of the street cars ("hell-grinders" we call them) as they cross the intersections of the lines, reached a pitch so unendurable. I have often felt that anything might happen to me in consequence of it—suicide, insanity, a divine revelation,

sudden conversion, or a prompt sale of my soul to the devil on condition that he would deliver me from this torment. Well, there is a palm-shaded place, hard by named Pershing Square, whither there resorts, at the midday hours, a great multitude, mostly of men, so great that every seat is occupied and hardly standing space remains. There they sit or stand in the sun or the shadows and hold debate one with another, like the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*, on every conceivable topic on which two (or a thousand) opinions are possible, from freewill to the disappearance of Lindbergh's baby.<sup>1</sup> This daily gathering is known among the local wits as the "Spit and Argue Club." The arguments are interesting; some of those I heard showed a high degree of intelligence and knowledge, while, as to the spitters, there is no occasion to be nervous; they are circumspect and skilful, a little care in avoiding the neighbourhood of a beginner being all that is needed.

On the first day I visited the place I joined a tightly-packed group in the midst of which a keen discussion was going on between two men, seated side by side on a bench, as to the respective claims of Shakespeare and Schopenhauer to be the greatest man the human race has produced. Both men seemed to belong to the working-class. The defender of Shakespeare was, I thought, a German; Schopenhauer's champion was plainly

<sup>1</sup> The discovery that it had been murdered was not yet made.

a Jew. Each knew well what he was talking about and a better conducted argument I have seldom heard. Nothing in that line could be more admirable than the way each of them met and countered the other's points. The audience also seemed quick of apprehension and never failed to applaud a successful hit. A man, whom I judged by his dress to be the conductor of a street car, detaching himself from the group, said to me as he went away, "I'd like to hear the finish of that, but I can't stay. Guess that foreign guy'll give the Jew hell before he's done"—a remark in which I thought there was a trace of racial animosity, for the Jew was holding his ground very well, though, *a priori*, he stood for the weaker side. Such was my first acquaintance with the Spit and Argue Club in Pershing Square. The next had a different ending.

It took place two days later. For some time I wandered—if one can wander in so thickly packed a crowd—from group to group, not hearing anything that held me for long. Lindbergh's baby was going strong on several of the benches; but I had heard enough about that already. One man appeared to be discussing the doctrine of Relativity, for I heard the names of Einstein and Professor Millikan and something about "measuring rods" and "the observer's point of view." Some were advocating communism amid heated opposition; but these seemed to be foreigners and spoke their words with an

American accent so strong that I couldn't follow them; for though I understand English fairly well when touched with the American accent, it becomes unintelligible to me when that peculiarity drowns it. Going farther I heard a loud voice declaring that the American people were "mostly fools"—a distinction which I had previously supposed Carlyle had fixed for all time on the British—whereupon somebody in the audience called out, "And you the damndedst of the lot," to which the orator could find nothing better to reply than, "Except you." At last I drew up by a group where a fierce duel was being fought between fundamentalism and modernism, with considerable interruption from the bystanders. The duellists were a young man who might have been a student from the great Bible College a few blocks away (the fundamentalist he) and an elderly man of benign aspect, stammering tongue and mind all in a mush, but hot for the cause of modernism. For some time, I will here interrupt myself to say, a suspicion had been creeping over me that I had wandered into Bedlam, and I had fallen into the mood which inclines one to think foolish thoughts about the futility of life in general, especially the argumentative part of it, and to say with the Fool in the play, "Motley's the only wear." But to resume. In view of my antecedents, the controversy about fundamentalism and modernism should have recalled me from this undesirable state of mind.

It didn't. It had precisely the opposite effect. As I tried to follow the to and fro of the controversy—stupid enough as there and then conducted—I found myself sinking deeper and deeper into the ocean of absolute indifference, that ocean "without bottom and without shore." Then, suddenly, the whole scene in which I was taking part and my fellow-actors in it completely vanished from consciousness. I saw nothing, heard nothing, knew nothing. The next thing I remember was being seated opposite my wife in the dining-room of the hotel, to which I must have made my way in a state of somnambulism, cheerfully ordering a very good lunch. My wife asked me to give her news of my morning's doings. I could think of nothing to reply except that I had been taking a ride on the surface of the earth as she performed her daily revolution on her axis—

*"Rolled round in earth's diurnal course  
With stones and rocks and trees."*

If I am asked to name a cause for these phenomena, which I never experienced elsewhere than in America, I can only give a speculative answer. When reality overdoes her part she ceases to be reality and becomes appearance. When appearance overdoes hers, she ceases to appear. When facts are too boisterous, too loud voiced, too self-assertive, too brilliantly lighted up, they cease to be facts and become nothing. And America is a

country where reality, appearance and fact are all inclined to overdo their parts. Her rock bottoms are too solid; her brass tacks too hard. As one of her own poets rather impertinently puts it:

*“Safe upon the solid rock  
The ugly houses stand;  
Come and see my shining palace  
Built upon the sand.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Edna Millay.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CALIFORNIANS

*San Francisco, California.*

I AM now in California, the Promised Land of the American people, though some say the Promised Land is Florida (a State thought lightly of in California, as California is thought lightly of there), while others, namely, the Mormons, place the centre of it in Salt Lake City, and not without reason according to reports. When I was in Florida, I was myself convinced that I had found the Promised Land; I am equally convinced of it in California, and doubtless when I arrive at Salt Lake City the Mormons will persuade me to support their claim. Which only means, after all, that Uncle Sam is luckier than Moses in having three Promised Lands wherein he may escape from his Egyptian bondage to the almighty dollar and learn to worship the true God. He has hardly done so yet. There are Canaanites and Hittites, to say nothing of Philistines, still dwelling in all three of his Promised Lands engaged in their heathen practice of converting God's own country into real estate and making off with the spoils. The Joshua who is to shatter their

strongholds and piously hew their kings in pieces before the Lord has not yet appeared. Meanwhile the chosen people dwell precariously but hopefully in the land. They know the Lord is on their side.

For five weeks I have been travelling from one to another of the sunlit, sea-washed cities strung along the coast of this enchanted land. San Diego, on the Mexican border with her Spanish complexion; La Jolla, on whom the mountains look and she on the sea; Los Angeles, with her stunning noises and four hundred square miles of city area to make them in; Long Beach with her resplendent liquor ships anchored just outside the twelve-mile limit; Pasadena beautiful, slumless and scientific; Santa Barbara with her coat of many colours and wine-dark eyes; Monterey with a sedater loveliness; Palo Alto tall-timbered and academic, and now San Francisco, where I sometimes ask as I walk the streets (but not as I look at the Bay), "What is the difference between being here and being in New York?" and know not how to answer.

These have been my resting-places. And, between them, penetrations of interiors and hinterlands, ascents of mountains green and barren, descents into fertile valleys where, strange to say, no rivers flow, crossings of flower-carpeted deserts, the colours soft, the light pure, the air like the breathings of the Holy Ghost and a thousand scenes so lovely to look on that one is

content at the sight of them to say, "Oh," and apt to resent the chatter of anyone who tries to say more. All this in closed and well-windowed automobiles (with generous pauses at chosen spots), a confinement afflicting to one like me, pricked as I am by a perpetual longing to get out and walk, and not wanting at all to get *there*, but rather to linger *here*. Which absurd anachronism my American friends, with their up-to-date standards of locomotion, do not understand and will only allow me to indulge on earnest entreaty and promise given that I will come back soon to the waiting car.

This leads me to remark that the American's mentality, revealed in his praise of "forward-looking men," is one of *there* as distinct from *here*. I mean that the American's interests lie some distance ahead of where he actually is at the moment. This, it may be said, is a common human characteristic. I agree: "man never *is* but always *to be* blessed." But the difference is that the American does not believe this time-honoured saying. That, he will declare, is "all bunk." According to his philosophy the reason we are always chasing our blessings and failing to capture them is that we don't chase them *fast enough*. He believes that, by putting a strong foot on the gas and getting up speed, Achilles will soon overtake the tortoise: our blessings will then give in and own themselves captured, just as the natives gave in and owned themselves "discovered"

when Columbus first landed in the country. This goes far to explain his devotion to speed, his marvellous ingenuity in devising short-cuts to his end, his way of turning his ends, the moment he has attained them, into *beginnings* of something else, his use of his home as a point of departure, his nomadic habits (strongly marked in California) and his restlessness in general—all of which, when you ask for his own explanation of it, he is pretty sure to set down as “a survival of the pioneering spirit.” Place him in Elysium: he will immediately order a high-power car to be ready at 10.45 to-morrow to take him somewhere else, and will refuse to believe it is Elysium if he finds that he has to stay there. Or talk to him about religion; the odds are great that in two minutes you will find him discussing, not religion, but the *future* of religion: or ask him a question about his country and, two to one, his answer will refer to his country’s *future*. My friends’ reluctance to let me get out and walk was all of a piece with this. That, in their opinion, was not the way to get *there*. Doubtless they were right.

I found California easily, though it took me five days and nights of continuous travel, starting from New Orleans, to get there—days and nights passed pleasantly enough in recovering from a debauch of oratory in the Southern States, looking out of the window, reading Edna Farber’s *Cimarron* (judiciously commended to me by a gentleman in Oklahoma City), chatting with

affable fellow-travellers, or with my good friend and sagacious adviser the conductor of the Pullman car or, not least, with the negro porter, a skilful maker of beds and a devoted admirer of Sir Oliver Lodge, in cosmic and other speculations, who had eleven children (three at college) and a philosophy of life hilariously optimistic, in spite of his reiterated belief that the whole country was "stone broke."

I had no difficulty, I say, in finding California; but on arriving—this was in Southern California—I had some difficulty, at first, in finding the Californians.

Not that I found the country uninhabited; Los Angeles alone, my first stopping-place, having a population of a million and a half. But the people I met and conversed with were immigrants from other States, differing widely in antecedents and outlook, to say nothing of the Chinese, Japanese, Philippinos, Mexicans and negroes who swarmed in certain streets. Here, thought I, is a new kind of "melting-pot" where the ingredients are of Uncle Sam's own making, an interesting variation of the grand melting-pot "problem" which contains ingredients much more refractory and forms the staple of discourse whenever the future of America is under consideration.

My first impression, gained from delightful people living in delightful places, was such as one might receive on arriving at a City of Refuge, or alternatively on entering the atmosphere of a

religious Retreat. Here, it seems, is the place where harassed Americans come to recover the joy and serenity which their manner of life denies them elsewhere, the place, in short, to study America in flight from herself; and even now, when my first impressions have been radically corrected, I feel that this was not wholly wrong. After all there is something about these people that suggests a population of refugees. Here come those imbued with "the philosophy of escape," which I heard described the other day, by a philosopher in these parts, as the dominant philosophy in cities farther east; men, and women too, who endure the din, the routine and the racket in the hope of being able to escape thereafter into a serener air; for whom business is a means to the end of being able to retire from business, and the place they are living in and the life they live in it tolerable only as the necessary point of departure for another. To all such, and to the victims of hard climates, monotony, boredom and life's contradictions in general California is a magnet; the farmer from Iowa, tired of ploughing and reaping the level earth; the cultured Bostonian, tired of the Lowells and Cabots; the tired meat-packer from Kansas City; the stockbroker from New York, the banker from Philadelphia, the newspaper magnate from Chicago, the steel magnate from Pittsburgh, the oil magnate from Oklahoma, a host of magnates, and sub-magnates of every known variety; seekers

of health, sunshine, change, pleasure, beauty, rest; shunners of toil, care, routine and tumult; haters of closed walls and lovers of the open air; some fleeing the killing cold of the Boston winter, others the killing heat of the New Orleans summer; some the monotony of plains, great lakes and sluggish rivers; others the more dismal monotonies of fashionable life; some thinking of themselves, others of their children. For where in the wide earth will you find a scene or climate better adapted to the rearing of the young human animal, the sunshine soaking into him all the year round and a wisp of clothing enough for the covering of his nakedness; high spirits drawn in with every breath of the quickening air; the best of schools at command and education flowing through the land as a mighty stream?

All these come, and with them a yet greater multitude of adventurers, exploiters and speculators; for here are oil fields, mines and forests; pasturage for millions of cattle; widespread valleys where the grape, the citrus, the olive and all manner of fruits flourish as in the garden of Eden; small cities ambitious to become large and ten thousand beauty spots waiting to be converted into real estate. Here money can be made as elsewhere, some say more easily; it can be lost also; behold these mighty cities where the making and losing go on apace, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, Los Angeles and San Francisco, roaring with the same voice,

flaring with the same lights, harassed with the same "problems" as the New Yorks, Chicagos, Pittsburghs, Philadelphias, Omahas and Buffaloes whence the refugees have taken their flight. Like so much else in America, California is a paradox; a place to retreat *to* and a place to retreat *from*. To which class Hollywood belongs I cannot say; the answer will be according to temperament. But there is a notable difference between the sordid ugliness of Main Street in Los Angeles and the hills and sea of Santa Barbara, with her coat of many colours and wine-dark eyes; here the question is less debateable.

Among the host of refugees you may distinguish a special class—that of the nomads. I have heard them described as the vanguard of a coming change in the structure of society, when the moving car will have reduced the stationary home to a thing of secondary importance, or even caused it to disappear. This, perhaps, is an empty dream; in most places climatic conditions oppose it, though even in hard climates the car is still a menace to the home. But in California it is not impossible. Given a sufficiency of dollars, you and your family, by choosing time and place, can live the life of civilized nomads all the year round, escaping from civilization it may be, but yet pursued by it in the shape of electricity, gasoline, certified water, telephones and loud-speakers laid on in the remotest parts of the wilderness. True, there may be difficulties if young

children are in the case and their schooling to be thought of; but in these days well-to-do people are not apt to be bothered by too many children, and if there are one or two, what is to prevent a second car for the nurse, governess or tutor, with their various impedimenta, and a third for the nursery equipment, open-air schoolroom apparatus and general camp outfit; yes, and even a fourth for the doctor and his belongings. And what about more interesting contingencies? They need not deter you; an up-to-date maternity home is sure to be within the reach of your high-powered car and here is your own doctor at hand to give authentic confirmation that all is going well. Such swift-moving and portentous caravans I have heard of; others less complete I have seen. Many do indeed live in this cheerfully nomadic manner or in some approximation to it. And why not? Only that you may get tired of it, and find after a time that perpetual locomotion even in California is one degree less romantic than the immobilities of home life.

Had I to choose a great American city for my dwelling-place the choice would not be easy, but I think it would fall on San Francisco. At least among the cities I know; but I have many more yet to visit and may alter my mind before I have done. The risk of being buried under earthquake ruins is a cheap price for the view of the Bay and the Golden Gate and the voice of the mighty Pacific, "swinging slow with solemn

roar" on shining beaches or thundering on cliffs that face the setting sun. No, there cannot be much amiss with the claim that San Francisco makes for herself, to have the finest situation of any city on the face of the earth.

But here as elsewhere I notice an interesting peculiarity in the speech of my American friends when introducing me to the natural wonders of the land. What they seem anxious to impress upon me is not that the scene before me is wonderful, which, of course, I can see for myself, but *more* wonderful than one I have seen or am about to see somewhere else. This peculiarity is especially noticeable among the Californians. You pay the San Franciscan no compliment by telling him that the situation of his city is fine or beautiful. What he wishes you to admit, and is not satisfied till you have admitted, is that the situation is the *finest* or the *most* beautiful you have seen or are likely to see anywhere. In other words, what would be reckoned a comparative excellence in other States becomes superlative excellence in California. I have heard this peculiarity explained in several ways; by some as a variation of America's general ambition to break the record in everything she is and does; by others, more superficially, as a survival from pioneering days, when a man was honoured not for having killed so many Red Indians but for having killed *more* than anyone else, as counted by the notches on his gun. Explain the

peculiarity as you will, its intrusion into the æsthetic field is an interesting phenomenon.

In these days we have grown so familiar with famous scenes from photographs, moving pictures and other pictorial arts, that travel has lost much of its romance and descriptions of scenery become superfluous. I shall make no attempt, therefore, to describe the scene which confronts you as you stand on some point of vantage and look out on the Bay, with the widespread city below you, the Golden Gate to your left, the mountains beyond, and the heights of Berkeley away to the right. You will think better of the universe when you have seen it; but perhaps a little worse of your fellow-man. For there is an evil genius abroad in this land, not unknown in other lands but here enjoying a freedom denied him elsewhere—an evil genius, I say, which invariably prompts somebody, in the exercise of his right "to do as he damned likes," to disfigure the beautiful face of nature<sup>1</sup> whenever there is a prospect that dollars will reward him for the outrage. Here, as you look out on the Bay, you will see an example of this wickedness, indeed many, but one in particular. With that eye of yours for the study of landscape, you will observe that all the lines of sea, sky and mountains have been designed by nature, here employing none of her apprentices but intent on a masterpiece of her own, to converge

<sup>1</sup> It is protected, thank God, in the National Parks, some of which are large enough for a small kingdom.

and fall on a spot away to the north, called, I believe, by the general name of Marin County, with the opal waters of the Bay in broad expanse intervening between you and it. Delighted and entranced your eyes follow the lovely flowing lines until they come to that point of rest. And what do they rest upon? A villainous congregation of oil tanks. Damn! And the recording angel drops an obliterating tear on the offending word as he writes it down in your black book.

This evil, like most other evils in America, is abundantly denounced by the Americans themselves. Among my own friends I have hardly met one who was not aware of it and hurt by it. Nevertheless it flourishes even in California where culture runs high, where art schools are numerous, æsthetics studied in the colleges, the "appreciation of beauty" taught as a subject in many common schools and in most that claim to be uncommon, which also are numerous. Perhaps the reason is that in California there is more beauty to be defaced than elsewhere. Certainly the defacers of it have not lost their opportunity.

Even to the casual observer the physique of the Californians shows a difference for the better as compared with the Eastern side of the country. On the crowded sidewalks of the larger cities there is no observable difference—at least none that I could observe; damaged humanity, that sinister product of urban civilization, seems to me just as much in evidence there as anywhere

else, and the damage, mostly biological, pretty much of the same kind. But wherever the young people are gathered in their schools, colleges and playing fields signs of a superior physique become apparent. - In the common schools that I visited the first thing that struck me was the look of health on the children's faces; often I would scan the benches in vain for a single anæmic or devitalized body, for a single pair of lack-lustre eyes. The impression deepens in the colleges, some of which have great populations of young men and women—there are 30,000 in the University of California. Among the men, fine athletic forms seem to be the majority; while, as to the girls, the natural grace of their movement, their lightness of step, the easy swing and vigour of their carriage are a cure for pessimism and a delight to see. All which impressions will be confirmed, on the whole, by a visit to the sunny sea beaches, where Californian physique of both genders, arrayed in a costume approximately that of Eden before the Fall, may be observed in countless forms as they come from the hands of the All-maker.

In spite of the many new cults which have been invented in California, each with a grain of truth in it and some with two, the religion of the people remains, in name at least, predominantly Christian, and of all denominations. But I strongly suspect the whole population of a leaning to paganism, Aphrodite competing with Mammon

for the place of chief deity. The sons of Belial also abound, though not as an organized denomination, unless the bootleggers and their kindred may be considered such. You can hardly imagine Christianity being born in California, though it is less difficult to imagine it coming to an end there. Certainly the Puritan strain of it has died out on the sea beaches. What the new cults can do to provide a substitute remains to be seen. Meanwhile the Jesuit missions, founded by heroic missionaries when the land was peopled by savages, still survive, reminding the Californians of the Angels and Saints to whom three-fourths of their cities are dedicated, and standing solid for the Ten Commandments.

## CHAPTER X

### IN SEARCH OF "THE HUNDRED PER CENT AMERICAN"

*Somewhere in Arizona.*

As I travel from city to city and find delightful people everywhere, in the "wild and woolly" West as in the cultured East, from whose beautiful kindness I should have died a hundred deaths but for the protection of a suit of armour I brought with me from home—as I thus travel from one to another of these pleasant death-traps, a question almost invariably asked me is this: "What is there in our city you specially wish to see: the schools, the colleges, the factories, the art galleries, the museums, the shops, the parks, the residential quarters or the surrounding country? And whom would you like to meet—business men, school teachers, college professors, the Mayor, the Governor, the President of the University? Say the word and my car, etc., etc."

"Yes," I have sometimes replied, "there is one person above all others I want to meet and shall never be content until I do. I want to meet a genuine hundred per cent American—a

real hundred percenter. Ever since I came to this country I have been looking for a man or a woman answering to that description; but I have never found one whose claim to be the man or woman in question was not disputed by somebody else." I would then tell how I thought I had found my man in Illinois or in Texas but how, on mentioning his name to my friends in those parts, they would reply, "Him a hundred percenter! Why, he was raised in Boston." What I want to find, I would go on, is the man or woman *indisputably* a hundred per cent American.

My friends would be somewhat bewildered by this request and inclined, I think, to regard it as rather unreasonable. It was clear that they had the same difficulty that I had in finding the indisputable 100-percenter. Not one of them ever claimed to be himself, or herself, the object of my quest; and when I would charge one of them, as I sometimes did, with being 100 per cent he would give some modest reason why, in his own eyes, he fell short of the ideal. Or perhaps he would say that he had travelled about the world too much; or that he had lived ten years in Europe; or that his grandfather was a Spaniard; or that his mother was an English-woman; or that he was in favour of America joining the League of Nations; or that he believed in universal Free Trade; or that he admired the Roman Catholics, though not one of them; or that he had been a Rhodes Scholar in Oxford;

or that he thought "all this talk about 100 per cent Americanism was bunk"—a reason given me on three separate occasions by gentlemen with whom I conversed in the smoking-rooms of Pullman cars. One, who appeared to be a philosopher, said that the 100-percenter was an ideal, not a reality; that I must not look for him on the earth, because, like Plato's City of God, he exists only in heaven; and then, checking himself, "or perhaps in hell"—a quick transition which I have often observed in American speech.

Sometimes in answer to urgent request, my friends would say, "The thing's easy enough. There are lots of people in this city who claim to be 100-percenters, lots: indeed (looking round) there are three or four of them in this hotel lobby at the present moment; that big man you see coming out of the dining-room—he's running for Governor—is one of them; but, to tell you the truth, we're a little ashamed of their goings on and, if you don't mind, would rather introduce you to someone else. For instance, there's the President of the North Western Road and his daughter sitting on that settee to your left. Come along; you'll like to meet *them*." Indeed I came to suspect a kind of secret conspiracy among my friends to keep the 100-percenter concealed, or at least to draw a red herring across the trail whenever I got on his scent.

In one city I was about to visit I was told in advance that I should find the mayor an out-

standing 100-percenter and vociferous in the cause. I resolved that, come what might, I would manage somehow to get an interview with that mayor; but on arriving at the city I was informed that he was under indictment by a Citizen's Committee for malfeasance in his office and was not receiving visitors just then. On another occasion I was told to look for what I wanted among the Daughters of the American Revolution, and preparations were made for introducing me to one of them. But she had a German sounding name, being descended, as I discovered, from a Hessian soldier who had deserted to the American side in the revolutionary war. This, I thought, threw a suspicion on her genuineness and the introduction never came off. I was also advised that I should find my man among "the descendants of the men who came over in the *Mayflower*," of whom there are an astonishing number about New England and elsewhere; but on trying my luck on a Boston gentleman, authentically known to be descended from a Pilgrim, and he discovering that I took him for a 100-percenter, he became so indignant, that I feared the loss of a valuable friendship and dropped the subject immediately.

I was in despair of finding the elusive object of my search when, here in Arizona, it suddenly appeared and almost flung itself into my arms, but not in the person of a "he-man." I will

relate the manner of this discovery, only premising that, though the reader may have another opinion, I myself am fully convinced that I had found, at last, a genuine 100-percenter.

I was just finishing breakfast in an hotel, when a wandering bell boy, of African extraction, entered the dining-room and began calling out my name. There was a lady named Miss Smith (for so I will call her) waiting in the lobby, he said, who wanted to see me. Now I had not the faintest idea who Miss Smith might be. I feared she was a reporter or, since this was unlikely in the wilds of Arizona, an apostle of some new religion.

To the lobby I accordingly went and was there confronted by the most delightful vision imaginable, a beautiful girl with dark eyes and nature's colour in her cheeks, her figure that of a young palm tree in the garden of Apollo, her movements so animated, her speech so quick, her whole presence so radiant that of her might be aptly quoted the lines of Donne:

*"Her pure and eloquent blood  
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought  
That you might almost say—her body thought."*

Without a sign of embarrassment, self-consciousness, tentative approach, intelligent hesitation, or other obstruction to the free communion of souls, she advanced to meet me; and with manners as charming as her person—which

struck me with a little surprise, for I had been told (but how many foolish things have I not been told about Americans?) that manners in Arizona were crude as a buffalo's, whereas hers were graceful as a fawn's—with manners, I say, as charming as her person, and exactly fitted to it, she grasped my hand and, continuing to hold it, addressed me somewhat as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*“Dr. Jacks! Is it you? Really you, I mean? Not somebody pretending to be you? I know you, but you won’t remember me. I’ll tell you who I am. I’m just the happiest girl in America! The very happiest! And it’s meeting you that makes me so. Yes, sir. Do you remember giving that lecture on ‘Time-thinking’ at the Vacation Course in Oxford? Well, I was there. Took down every word you said about time-thinking—I’ve got it all here in my bag if you’d like to see it after we’ve talked—I learnt stenography at college. You told us that we should learn to think in time as well as in space. Well, I’ve learnt to think in time, though I’m not perfect yet, and O my! it’s made a new girl of me. Till then I was all confused, but now I’m beginning to see my way. Gee! It’s given me a new attitude to life. And Dad’s taken it up, too. I gave him your book for a Christmas present and he’s just crazy about it. Quotes*

<sup>1</sup> On reading over my notes of this conversation my impression is that the original was far more racy, on the lady’s part, than my version of it. I fear I have done her scant justice.

'time-thinking' almost every Sunday in his sermons. He's a minister and I'm a secretary. He says time-thinking will save the country. Don't you think we've got into an awful mess? The country's too big. We need time-thinking to pull us together. If only they'd make Al Smith President! He's the only one who thinks in time. But he hasn't a chance —because he's a Roman Catholic and doesn't pronounce his words right. And you *will* call me Susie, won't you? And to think that we should meet in Arizona! And that I should be talking to you *now!* I'm just *thrilled!* It's simply fine!"

There was much more and I think it was nearly five minutes before I could get in a word.

"Susie," I said, "tell me more about yourself. Were you born in Arizona?"

"Yes: born and raised, too; though I graduated in Colorado. Arizona's the bulliest State in the Union. The climate puts kick into you all day long and every day. And what do you think of the Grand Canyon? Didn't it *scare* you? It scared *me*. When I looked over the rim I couldn't speak, and you know it means something when an American girl can't speak. And the *colour!* I said to Elmer, 'Boy, what that old trapper said when he first saw the Canyon was true.' You haven't heard what the old trapper said? He said: 'God Almighty! You made that darned hole in your wrath, but you painted it in your love.' Gee! That was poetry!"

"So you found your tongue after all?"

"You're quick. Of course I'm not logical. But who can be logical when talking about the Canyon? It just *makes* you contradict yourself."

"Did you do any 'time-thinking,' Susie, when you stood on the rim and looked down into that awful abyss?"

"Millions of years, sir. I said to Elmer, 'Doesn't it remind you of Time like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away? That's Dad's favourite hymn. Think of the ages and ages it took to make that hole and to paint it! I just *wallowed* in time. I felt it rolling over me in floods. So did Elmer."

"You must tell me about Elmer later," I said. "But first I want to know more about yourself. What about that new attitude towards life that you've got out of time-thinking?"

"Well, it's like this. I just want to get the best out of everything, and to get it *right now*. And I know there's a best to get. Out of *everything*—books, friends, nature, art, love, work, play, father, mother—everything and everybody."

"I never said anything like that, Susie, in the lecture at the Vacation Course."

"No: but it follows from your principles."

"Does it? I don't know. It sounds rather pagan. Don't you think you're rather a selfish girl?"

"Selfish! It's not selfish one bit! Why, you

can’t get the best out of anything unless you help others to get it, too. And as to being pagan—why, that’s only a bad name you give it. Oh, I’d love to go to Hollywood and be trained for the talkies!”

“For God’s sake, don’t!” I interrupted. “That’s not the place to get the best out of everything for a girl like you.”

“I’m not going to; though I majored in phonetics when I was at college and got a prize for an oration on the American Constitution. But tell me—what do you think of my pronunciation? How does it compare with the way the English girls speak—I mean the educated ones?”

“I wish the educated English girls always pronounced the language as distinctly as you do. All the same there’s a difference in the way of it.”

Here followed a discussion on the difference, which I omit. It ended with my saying: “Anyhow, I’m glad you’re not going to try out your phonetics at Hollywood, though I dare say you’d make your fortune.”

“No, *sir!*” she exclaimed. “Why, only last week a guy from Hollywood came round and offered me a job—he’s the third in six months. I said ‘Yes, if I may choose my parts! But I’m not going to act those scenes with the men!’ Guess you know what scenes I mean—the ones they all end up with, the ones they have to drop

the curtain on. I'm not that kind of girl. I have my standards—and ideals, too. And you bet I'm not going to let them go. I'm really a kind of pioneer—experimenting all the time. I'd love to have come out with the pioneers—same as grandmother did. She's living still. You'd love grandmother. And father and mother, too. They're just lovely! Come to our city and hear grandmother's stories about the pioneers. Indians, grizzly bears and hunting the buffalo. Yes, sir; and I'm a hunter, too. Great men, great things, great thoughts. Yes, sir, I *hunt*."

"You seem a chip off the old block, Susie," I said. "But where are your axe and rifle?"

"In my soul. My standards and ideals. And I let that guy from Hollywood know it."

"And now tell me about Elmer. Who is he?"

"A boy friend of mine. We've come here for a week-end trip. We are staying with my aunt—so *that's all right!* I've lots of boy friends."

"No doubt. But is Elmer a special one, or just one among others?"

"He's the one I want you to know. *Elmer!* Come here. It's your turn now."

As Elmer approached from the other side of the hotel lobby, where he had been patiently smoking cigarettes during the above conversation, Susie whispered to me:

"He's twenty-three. I'm twenty-two. He

majored in architecture and town planning at Ann Arbor. He designed our new High School—it cost 300,000 dollars. You ought to see it."

In my time I've known so many cases of finely-tempered women winding up the romance of their youth by throwing themselves away on men who are not worthy of them that I was half-afraid Susie might have been making a similar mistake. But all these misgivings vanished the moment Elmer came into full view. *Mutatis mutandis* he was her equal, and I gazed upon him with complete satisfaction. Nor had he majored in architecture and town planning for nothing; he, too, had his "standards and ideals," though of a different kind from Susie's. He regarded architecture, he said, as one of the most effective forms of "social service"; his "prof." had always impressed that on the boys, and didn't I think that the new High Schools, which had been built in America since the War, showed that architecture was a real factor in American civilization? And what about architecture in England? Was it regarded as a branch of the public service? I replied I was afraid it was not. "Well," he said, "it isn't in this country either. Not yet. But that's my standard of what it ought to be." After talking in this strain for some time he got up and left, saying that he didn't want to spoil my talk with Susie. To her he simply said, "So long, Susie;" to which she responded by throwing him a kiss.

"And now," said she the moment he was gone, "what do you think of that boy? Is he O.K.?"

From the eagerness with which this was asked it was clear that the centre of gravity of Susie's existence lay in the question and that there was another reason besides "time-thinking" for her new "attitude towards life."

"Elmer," I replied, "is a boy after my own heart. But what a pity you can't bring all the others and line them up before me like a rogues' gallery."

"Too many of them," laughed Susie, "they'd make a line two blocks long."

"Susie," I said, "if I were Elmer's age, can you guess where I should be?"

I think she guessed the answer, but she pretended not to and said, "I can't think." My notes run on:

L.P.J. "Well, I should be somewhere in that line two blocks long."

Susie. "You don't mean that I'm good enough for *you*!"

L.P.J. "You're good enough for any man, Susie, and much too good for most."

Susie. "Then I must be good enough for Elmer. Now, honest-to-God, do you think I am? No kidding. That's the point. My, if you only knew how I've worried over it!"

L.P.J. "You expect me to answer that, when I've only known you for an hour and Elmer for less than half one?"

Susie. "The psychometrist took less than an hour."

L.P.J. "The *what*?"

Susie. "The psychometrist. We've had our psychometrical marriage-chart made out."

L.P.J. "And what does it come to?"

Susie. "That's the trouble. We're not to marry."

L.P.J. "Why not?"

Susie. "Because it would be marriage on an emotional basis without the right intellectual coefficients."

L.P.J. "Bosh!"

Susie. "That's what Elmer thinks. Only we call it 'bunk' in this country, or 'poppycock' and other names, too. There's such a lot of it about. Elmer's crazy about it. He'd like to kill that psychometrist."

L.P.J. "So should I. It would be justifiable homicide."

Susie. "But I want *your* opinion. Do you think I'm really good enough for Elmer?"

L.P.J. "Have you ever thought it out in terms of time? Growing older, I mean. Have you ever asked what Elmer will be like when he's an old fellow of my age: and has Elmer ever asked the same sort of question about you?"

Susie. "Yes, and it didn't scare us a bit. That was the first lesson I gave Elmer. 'Boy,' I said, 'let's figure it out *in time*. Let's imagine ourselves at forty, fifty, sixty—when the children

are grown up.' We mean to have children. Yes, we've figured it all out."

L.P.J. "The parting must come, Susie, sooner or later."

Susie. "I know it! Death! It's terrible to think of! We both thought of it as we looked down into the Canyon. And I said to Elmer, 'Remember, boy, God made that hole in his wrath but painted it in his love.'—But *do* tell me what you think of me."

L.P.J. "All right. I'll tell you, honest-to-God. *You're a hundred per cent American.*"

Susie. "Me! Nobody ever told me that before. Why?"

L.P.J. "First, because you've only just come of age. Second, because no other country in the world could have produced a girl who would talk to me as you have this morning. Third, because the idea of your being a hundred percenter never occurred to you till I suggested it just now. Fourth, because your hundred percentage is your very self and not your 'attitude' towards America or anything else."

I was about to give other reasons when Elmer reappeared, and the look they interchanged was proof enough that the psychometrist had wasted his science; "Hurry up, little girl," said Elmer, "or we shall miss the train." So Susie hurried up and the further reasons were not given. As the reader might find them unconvincing I will spare him the recital of them. But my own con-

viction that I had found, at last, a genuine hundred percenter remains unshaken and honest-to-God.

There are many Susies in America. I see them in the women's colleges, all over the land. I see them in every city, streaming out of the High Schools at noon, bareheaded, eager-faced, with books under their arms, their eyes quick to scan the passing male. They and their boy friends are a promising lot. They stand exposed to many corruptions; their emancipations look dangerous; but in America, as in the universe at large, an inner sentinel keeps watch and a sense of decency "guards the ford."

At the station—for I went to see them off—Susie, standing with Elmer on the platform of the Pullman, called out to me as the train was moving, "I wish there'd been time to get your impressions of the Canyon. Don't forget what the old trapper said. And if you write a book about America, put the Canyon in. And write to me on my birthday."

The Canyon is a big thing to put into a book. But since you have asked for it, Susie, in it shall go—along with the composite photograph you gave me of your charming self.

Before coming to that, however, here is the letter you will receive on your next birthday, the date of which you gave me on a slip of paper when we parted at the station.

## CHAPTER XI

### BIRTHDAY LETTER TO SUSIE OF ARIZONA

*San Antonio, Texas.*

“One of the questions you asked during our talk in the hotel lobby—for you must know, Susie, there was a touch of the interviewing reporter in the way you went on—was this: ‘How do the young people in America compare with the young people in England?’ That question had been previously fired at me in eight cities by as many reporters, some of them bright young women about your age.

“Well, my acquaintance with the young people of America, and with you and Elmer especially, has confirmed a conviction which began among the young people in England. In both countries they are the victims of abominable misrepresentation, and the wonder to my mind is that they have refrained so long from rising *en masse* and making a short end of their traducers. They are currently reported to be in a state of ‘moral chaos,’ without standards of right and wrong, and generally inclined to become disciples of the Devil and the Scarlet Woman. To judge by the version of youth given in popular novels and the picture

shows, one would conclude that both sexes live in a universe composed mainly of adulterous solicitations, where the young men spend their time in attacking the chastity of the young women, while these, on their part, begin to yield at the first assault. The outstanding feature in this picture of young people is their *feebleness*; they have no *wills*; but just drift along helplessly in whatever direction the gusts of sex passion happen to blow them. No *wills* and, I must add, not much *intelligence*.

“ This report, Susie, I don’t believe. I don’t believe it in England, and I don’t believe it in America. No doubt a collection of specimens could be made in this age as in any age, in England or in America, answering fairly well to the above description. But as a general account of youth in either country I hold the story a scandalous libel at all points, and strongly suspect that the people of whom it is mainly true are the authors of the libel themselves, who, having made a mess of their own lives, think to bring all to a level by persuading the young to be partakers of their plagues.

“ To make things worse many of our *pastors* and *spiritual guides* in both countries have accepted this libellous picture as true and combining it with other data of like questionable origin have worked up a first-class *pulpit scare* on the basis of it all, being mostly hard up for something to preach about and in a sad state of

confusion themselves, while mountebank philosophers, bankrupt apostles and propagators of delirium in general have been active on the outskirts, blowing their foolish wind into the conflagration and adding the fuel of their own nonsense to the flames. And what is the consequence? Why, of course, that many of the young people (who, after all, have no more sense than their elders) begin to act the part assigned them, disporting themselves like 'enchanted donkeys,' behaviourist automata, sex imbeciles or what not, if only by way of being, as they suppose, in the fashion.

"Familiar as I am with these deplorable phenomena I was considerably reassured by what you and Elmer had to tell me about your 'standards and ideals.' I greatly liked the answer you gave to that 'guy from Hollywood.' Bravo, Susie! I thought it significant, and know that in England, as in America, there are thousands of girls who would answer as you did, and thousands of Elmers who would say 'Bravo,' as I do, and thank their stars when they find girls such as you for their mates. I believe that you and Elmer are naturally immune from the influence of these falsifications, that it runs off you like water off a duck's back, and am prepared to lay long odds that your 'standards and ideals' will win out, hands over, against it all.

"And ditto for the Susies and Elmers in England, for, let me tell you, there are some promising

young people in my country, too. I wish you and they could get more together. I know you would understand one another finely; they a hundred per cent English just as you are a hundred per cent American. Of course there are multitudes of others (I have met them in both countries) who get bewitched by Freudian hear-says and psychological claptrap and think they are practising 'self-expression' when they are only playing the fool and expressing precisely what is *not* themselves. I am sorry for them, for they are more sinned against than sinning. But you and Elmer 'belong to another denomination' and it is your denomination, and not theirs, that I am putting into my book, along with the Grand Canyon, as representative of America's youth, a hundred per cent American and the hope and glory of your country. Many happy returns of your birthday! May you flourish *in sæcula sæculorum!* And here is a motto to serve till the last of your birthdays and for the voyage into the mighty deeps beyond:

‘*Se tu segui tua stella  
Non puoi fallire a glorioso porto.*’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If thou followest thy star a glorious home-coming cannot fail thee.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE GRAND CANYON OF ARIZONA

*February 21st, 1932. (From my wife's diary.)*

LEFT Williams yesterday at 4.30 p.m., having previously bought snow spectacles to protect the eyes from the glare, which became rather trying on passing into the brilliant sunshine reflected by the snow on the Arizona plateau. We had been ascending gradually for more than 100 miles and were now at an altitude of 7,000 feet above sea-level, a change which made itself felt in one's breathing. During the whole of the journey from Williams to the Grand Canyon we sat in the open at the end of the observation car looking out on a vast desert which extended interminably on either hand. The brilliance of the sunshine and the clearness of the atmosphere are indescribable. One could see ranges of snow-capped mountains 60 or 70 miles away. It was cold, though with the sun shining so strongly one hardly felt it. Thin snow was scattered everywhere: a beautiful but inhospitable scene. The only stopping places on the 64 miles' journey to the Canyon were minute stations surrounded by Indians' huts.

Reached the terminus at 6.30 and a bus, driven by a man in cowboy costume, whisked us off to the hotel, built on the rim of the Canyon. There are two hotels at the Canyon, one cheap and the other dear. By mistake we got into the cheap one and ate our dinner on stools at a long counter in the orthodox cafeteria fashion. Subsequently arranged to get the baggage transferred to the other, where we got a very nice room with the usual bath and everything else tip-top: 18 dollars a day for the two of us. Meanwhile we had been out to take a first look at the Canyon, which falls precipitously in front of the hotel. A full moon was shining high in the heavens: the conditions were perfect for moonlight effects. The scene baffles all description. In front an enormous abyss, eight miles across from the point where we stood and three miles deep to the point where the great Colorado river—third in size of American rivers—thunders along through a hidden gorge to the Gulf of California, the sound of it faintly rising from the depths below to the point on the rim where we stood. Walked along the rim for some distance to a place where the snow made further progress too difficult for night walk. Never shall I forget the scene I gazed on. Under the moonlight towered vast masses of rock; pinnacles, turrets, crags, precipices, *massifs* of every imaginable size and shape were clearly outlined, casting immense black shadows into the gulfs beneath them and on the surrounding

precipices. Two of these shadows struck me as very remarkable; one exactly resembling an enormous eagle in flight with outstretched wings covering perhaps a hundred acres and close beside it was a monstrous creature with the outline of a sheep.

I had read descriptions of the Canyon but no description can give a true impression of its awful and bewildering grandeur. The first sight of it by moonlight was simply overwhelming. I wondered what daylight would bring forth on the morrow. The Explorer of Profundities, with whom I was rash enough to link my destiny, remarked that the only pictures his imagination had ever formed that resembled what we saw were the visions conjured up by Dante's *Inferno*.

Next day weather conditions were perfect. We were out before breakfast to see the Canyon under the early sun. Its splendours were more visible, but its depths hardly less terrible to look into. At 9.30 we went with a party in a motor-bus to visit a point called Hermit's Rest where a trapper hermit once lived in a cave. The drive through the cedar woods, ground thickly carpeted with shining snow, was delightful. Emerging from time to time from the woods on to the rim, great reaches of the Canyon, which has a total length of 217 miles, burst into view. Again my pen fails me; language was not made to describe such things. To get some conception of it all you must realize that the Canyon is so

deep and wide that there is room in it for high mountains, one of them 7,800 feet high, their summits, including the one just mentioned, below the rim of the abyss. Lines of pearly white cloud were stretched out in filaments along the opposite walls of the Canyon. Looking level from our point, the view was bounded by the opposite rim of the chasm some ten miles away. Looking downwards there was first the line of clouds, then vast tumbled precipices of red sandstone, then avalanches of broken shale, then limestone, then granite: red, grey, white masses, until, finally, the eye rested on a tangle of black gorges; at the bottom of the largest was the Colorado river. From one point we saw the river clearly through a break in the gorge through which it flows. At that distance, which the guide said was just three miles below us, it looked a mere thread: yet it is 300 feet broad at that point and 30 feet deep, rushing along with tremendous velocity. A mule trail leads down to it, winding among crags and precipices. Had time allowed it we would certainly have gone down, but it takes two days to get down to the river and back.

Another motor trip had been arranged for the afternoon but we braved the snow and went off on our own. The Explorer summed up his impressions to date as follows: "Kant said there were two things which struck him dumb —the starry heavens above and the moral law within. He would have added a third if he had

seen what we have seen this morning and last night." And yet in point of colour it fades beside the brilliance revealed by that afternoon walk. It was to a point  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles away, and to reach which we plodded through drifts of snow. The snow lying in the brilliant sun under a sky of deep blue glittered and shone with a blinding effect; the spectacles were necessary. We stopped at many viewpoints along the rim (in the opposite direction to that of the morning) and watched the long shadows, lengthening and deepening from blue to purple, and purple to black among the crags, red, orange, brown and pink, till they rested on the grey lavender of the long slopes of shale. At last we reached our goal and stood on the verandah of a log cabin looking up and down the Canyon: this I think the finest viewpoint of all. One could see farther on either hand and deeper into the abysses below. Falling into conversation with the Ranger of the Canyon, a highly intelligent man and a good geologist, he said that the entire Canyon had been created by water erosions, explaining the geological history. It represents at least 50 million years of nature's work; it is still going on and may go on for another 50 million years if the planet lasts as long. Here we are buried in the immensities of time as well as in the immensities of space: "Our age is as nothing before Thee." One little incident impressed me: as I was gazing into the depths below suddenly out of the darkness of

one of these gulfs there rose up a great red-tailed hawk, the only living wild thing we had seen, and sailed majestically into the sunlight. I watched it for some time floating in the great space before us: apparently without moving its wings. It came quite near to us and then sank out of sight: it seemed like a messenger from the great deeps. As we walked back the shadows from the slowly sinking sun grew denser and the colours of the rocks, where the light fell on them, seemed not of this earth at all: red, white, orange, purple and lavender and salmon-pink: the shadows were deep blue and all the space between us seemed filled with that colour. The journey was hard going: but if it had been a hundred times harder we should have been repaid. I feel that something great has happened.

## CHAPTER XIII

### STANDARDIZATION

“ Go call a coach and let a coach be called,  
And let the man who calleth be the caller,  
And in his calling let him nothing call  
But Coach ! Coach ! Coach ! ”

*St. Louis, Missouri.*

LAST night I had a long discussion, with a gentleman of weight and consideration in this city, on standardization as an outstanding feature of American life. He took a rather melancholy view of it. It was one of many conversations I have had on the same topic, and mostly in the melancholy vein, with thoughtful people all over the country. I have also read much invective against it in books written both by Americans and foreigners, but without being convinced either by the conversations or the books that it constitutes, as so many of them maintain, a new curse imposed on the country in addition to that pronounced in the Garden of Eden. Standardization is indeed a favourite theme of domestic critics with a turn for pessimism (a numerous class in America) while foreign observers are apt to cite it as “ the first thing that strikes them.”

As to the latter, the opinion may be ventured that if they opened their eyes more widely they would be struck by something else. M. André Siegfried is, indeed, too wise an observer and too practised a student of human affairs to select standardization as "the thing that struck him first;" but even he is responsible for the statement that "the 100,000,000 individuals in the United States are astonishingly alike" and cites, as though it were a proof of this, a passage from Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* to the following effect:

"Nine-tenths of the American towns are so alike that it is the completest boredom to wander from one to another. Always west of Pittsburg, and often east of it, there is the same lumber yard, the same railroad station, the same Ford garage, the same creamery, the same box-like houses and two-storey shops. . . . The shops show the same standardized, nationally advertised wares; the newspapers of three thousand miles apart have the same syndicated features; the boy in Arkansas displays just such a flamboyant ready-made suit as is to be found on just such a boy in Delaware, both of them iterate the same slang phrases from the same sporting pages and if one of them is in college and the other a barber, no one may surmise which is which."

All this is true to fact and corresponds fairly well to my own experience in wandering among American towns "east and west of Pittsburg."

But what is the inference to be drawn from it? My answer, based on experience, would be that if you infer that the 120 millions of American individuals are as like one another as their box-like houses and two-storey shops, you will make a very great mistake, and if you proceed to treat them on the assumption that each one is a mere repetition of his fellow you will find yourself treated in return as an undesirable alien and will soon be taking your passage home. It is true that a crowd of Americans seen in one city, and the noises made by the crowd, bear a remarkable resemblance to the crowd you will see and the noises you will hear in another; and if you are too impatient to distinguish the trees from the wood, or if you resemble the millionaire quoted elsewhere who didn't "care a damn for what things are but only for what they look like," that will be the end of your observations, and on returning home you will report to your fellow-countrymen that all Americans are astonishingly alike. But your report will be one I shall not believe. Had you gone farther and looked more closely into the human phenomena, you would have found—if your experience at all corresponds with mine—that the 120 million individuals of America are no less "astonishingly" *unlike* one another than are the millions of your own native land.

What, then, does American standardization *mean*? By way of clearing the ground a few

general observations may not be out of place.

Before proceeding to comment, adversely or otherwise, on standardization as it exists in America the commentator (whether domestic or foreign) would enter upon his task with a clearer mind if he would pause to consider the phenomenon as it exists *in himself*—in his person, habits, speech, modes of thought and general conversation with the universe and his fellow-men.

' Might not nature be justly accused of having standardized us all? Have we not all two legs, two arms, two eyes, two ears and a general equipment of functioning members repeated without essential difference in every one of the two thousand million human beings inhabiting the planet? From that point of view might we not go farther than M. Siegfried and say that not Americans only but all the children of Adam are astonishingly alike? Mr. Sinclair Lewis, in the fiery passage quoted above, remarks on the tiresome identity between the suit of clothes worn by a boy in Delaware and the suit worn by a boy in Arkansas. But if Mr. Lewis were to strip the two boys of their identical suits and inspect them *in puris naturalibus* he would observe that the suits with which nature had provided them, to wit their skins, were more closely identical in cut, fashion and texture than those the boys had purchased in the chain store—not to speak of a thousand other identities too numerous

to mention. Neither is it much to the purpose that the two boys iterate the same slang phrases. Do we not all iterate the same phrase when we call a spade a spade? Would civilization be promoted by one man calling it a spade, another a shovel and a third not knowing what the devil to call it? And why attach importance to the common matter supplied by the syndicate Press? Would the Bible be better adapted to human needs if everybody had a different version of it? The same considerations might be commended to M. Siegfried, that notable commentator on American standardization, who, after quoting Mr. Lewis' invective with approval, goes on to contrast the superior taste and originality of the French workman with the mechanical ways of the mass-educated American. But where in the length and breadth of his ingenious native land will M. Siegfried find a French tailor original enough to cut trousers for a Christian biped with more legs than two, or less?

The amount of standardization which human beings can accept without finding their originality suppressed is astounding—only less astounding than their apparent unawareness of the enormous extent to which their lives are standardized by nature and social habit, and would still be standardized if mass production and Mr. Ford had never been heard of. The uniformity of nature itself, which all of us have to put up with in the daily rising of the sun, the law of gravitation and

thousands of such-like regularities, is nothing else than standardization called by another name. To complete the picture of this universal standardization, accepted without complaint by the majority of rational beings, would involve a description of the entire order of nature and a recapitulation of all the positive sciences. Out of this vast totality I must content myself with selecting a single item, and I select it because it reveals a principle in which the meaning of standardization (American or other) stands out perfectly clear.

In the age preceding that unfortunate turn in human affairs when the Tower of Babel brought confusion into the world it is reported that mankind were all of one speech. Language in those days was standardized on a uniform pattern; the confusion of tongues which now makes the Assembly of the League of Nations so difficult to manage was unknown. It was an age, therefore, in which a man could make an original remark, or an important one, with a reasonable expectation that the point of it would be immediately intelligible to every other man in the world. This, one would think, must have been a great incentive to originality. On the other hand, nothing could be more unfavourable to originality than the conditions which subsequently prevailed on the Plain of Shinar. For how can you make an original remark in a world where nobody understands what you are saying? Not only would the incentive to make it be lacking but you

would find on making the experiment that an unstandardized language, which means a language understood by nobody, was not a language at all, not a means by which anything could be expressed, whether original or not.

The matter might be endlessly elaborated but enough has been said to suggest the principle involved, which is nothing less than this—*standardization is a condition absolutely essential to all forms of human originality*. It is the rock on which originality builds; the ground on which creative genius plants its feet; the point of departure for every voyage of discovery; the chart and compass of the explorer; the armament of the conqueror; the vocabulary of the prophet; the tool of the artist; the business-like aspect of nature ; the blue-print of the universe. Whence follows the comforting hope for the world at large, and for America in particular, that the present age of standardization is but a station on the road to the coming of surpassing splendours in the way of originality and creativeness. And if America is more standardized than other countries this only means that she has a somewhat broader basis for the originality of the future. However that may be, this may confidently be said: all that America has done by way of increasing the universal standardization which nature and society have imposed on us all amounts to very little. Viewed in that vast perspective her contribution may be compared to a pea deposited on the summit of Mount Everest.

The picture of American standardization in the passage quoted from Mr. Sinclair Lewis is certainly not overdrawn. He describes the facts correctly. But I think he misinterprets them, or at least places them in a light where his readers are likely to do so, and it is somewhat regrettable that so accomplished a student of civilization as M. Siegfried should have followed his lead. For my own part, I interpret the facts quite differently. Having suggested what seems to me the true interpretation there can be no harm, therefore, in adding a few more particulars about American standardization to the account given by Mr. Lewis and M. Siegfried, always hoping that the reader will interpret them in the light of the principle just laid down.

Something akin to the spirit of standardized mass production seems to have animated the mind of the demiurge when he created the American landscape. As many travellers have remarked, there are regions where you may travel for a thousand miles and look out all the time on a landscape that seems to repeat itself endlessly. It is much the same with the scenery of America as it is with her natural resources; all varieties of it, both ugly and beautiful, exist in enormous quantity. If nature takes to swamp-making in America—and in some of the Southern States she seems to have had a deplorable turn for that kind of creative activity—she will either give you a single swamp hundreds of square miles in

extent, or she will scatter the region with hundreds of little swamps, each exactly like the others. So with lake-making. Instead of resting content with the modest allowance of lakes bestowed on our poor little Lake District in England she turns them out in tens of thousands and often so close one to another that (to quote the remark of an American friend) in admiring one you must be careful not to fall backward into its neighbour: in Florida alone there are 32,000 lakes, each with a name of its own. Or she will give you half a dozen monsters like the Great Lakes of the Middle West, where you may sail monotonously for days on end without knowing which of them you are sailing on until you have consulted the map or the captain. And even where nature turns artist, as she does in a thousand places, she is rarely content to offer you a single gem, like Grasmere or Rydal, but showers them on you in handfuls.

And so with the landscape in general. I recall a motor drive of some 200 miles given me by a friend in Western Pennsylvania hospitably intent on showing me the beauties of that region. We came to a hilltop, and there before us lay a deep and lovely valley with a shining stream wandering through the fertile levels. It was a bit of England at her best and reminded me of the Cotswolds. I remarked on it patriotically to my friend, and could hardly refrain from shouting with delight when I saw a

stone cottage—that rare phenomenon in rural America—standing just where it should. We descended into the valley and ascended the hill on the other side. Arrived at this new eminence, there, in front of us, were the Cotswolds again, with the stone cottage almost in the same position. A third hilltop repeated the vision, and so on for I know not how many miles. At last a weariness came over me and I began to wonder whether nature or the demiurge, or whoever was responsible for creating the American landscape, had foreseen the age of Mr. Ford, when America would lead the world in mass production, and prepared a background of scenery to correspond.

A similar correspondence of setting to subject may be observed in certain political principles much honoured by the Americans. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," says the Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, etc." Prophetic words! May we not discern in them the foreshadowing of a coming time when the principle here assigned to the creation of *men* would be transferred to the creation of *things*? Do not the words attribute to the Creator, in the creation of men, precisely that method of standardized mass production which at a later age was to become dominant in American industry? All men are created *equal*. So are Mr. Ford's cars, Mr. Statler's hotels and Mr. Wrigley's packets of chewing-gum. So are the portraits of George Washington on the two-

cent postage stamps or those of Abraham Lincoln on the five-cent ditto. So are innumerable other commodities which we have reason to thank God are not created unequal or different. Is it to be wondered at, then, that a people declared by their own Charter of Liberty to be themselves mass-produced, standardized, so to speak, in their mothers' wombs, should take to standardized mass production as a means of earning their living ? The sequence is surely a natural one. And is it not remarkable that an American writer of genius, like Mr. Sinclair Lewis, should write as though his country were discredited by the fact that the boy in Delaware wears a suit identical with that which covers the nakedness of the boy in Arkansas, or that when you see a barber and a college man standing side by side in America you cannot tell which is which ? What else should we expect in a world where all men are created equal ? My own conclusion, as an outsider, would rather be that the Americans, by establishing a uniform technique for the externals of life (which is what standardization means), have put themselves in a favourable posture for developing their inner differences and so becoming, in the long run, "astonishingly" unlike one to another. Which is, in fact, what I have found them to be.

In a country like America, composed of forty-eight States, some larger than Germany, widely

separated as Texas from Maine or California from New Jersey, and containing an immense diversity of races and interests, the value of a uniform technique in externals is obviously great. It functions in much the same way as the common language and might almost be defined as a second language added to that of the mother tongue. European observers, accustomed to the social conditions of smaller countries where diversity of interest is on a lesser scale and far less heterogeneous, are often slow to appreciate this aspect of American standardization. It should be reckoned an important contributory factor in maintaining the unity of the United States, a unity which looks at first sight almost like a miracle, and becomes intelligible only when we understand its fundamentally economic nature. In spite of the flag-waving that goes on everywhere there can be little doubt that if the economic tie were broken, as it would be by the abandonment of free trade between the States,<sup>1</sup> the American Republic would break up into at least five, the centres of which could be easily named. The unity of the United States is not exactly a live issue; but neither is it a dead one. It sleeps, and will continue to sleep so long as the economic tie remains intact. Americans all over the country know very well, and they would be blind if they did not know it, that the unity of the United

<sup>1</sup> There is no prospect of this happening.

States is not a thing that can be left to take care of itself but must be cared for, tended and fostered by all the means available, by the definite teaching of patriotism, by flag-waving, by salutes to the Stars and Stripes exacted from teachers and children in schools, by frequent celebration of national heroes, by public exaltation of everything and everybody to whom the word "American" can be specially attached. This is natural and indeed inevitable. How often have I heard the opinion expressed, by men whose speech was worth attending to, that the country was too big and too diversified to be manageable by any form of government—as any observer may see it would be if the economic tie were broken. And here it is that standardization comes to the help of the Americans in the mighty task of maintaining their national unity.

A patriotic Texan was discoursing to me not long ago on the excessive bigness of the country and wound up by lamenting that Texas had ever surrendered her independence to the United States. "We ought to have remained independent," he said, "after separating from Mexico. We should then have conquered California, and the two together would have become the seat of a splendid civilization. But now we are swamped in the general confusion." I replied by telling him the story of the Maori chief who, on being asked by a travelling anthropologist to explain the unity of his tribe, pointed out

to sea and said in a solemn voice, "Our ancestors came over yonder sea *in the same canoe.*" "We Americans," said the Texan, "have a stronger tie than that. We all ride about in Ford's cars and chew Wrigley's gum as we drive them." This, I thought, was an exaggeration, but the point of it went home. Our talk then turned to standardization, and this chapter is largely derived from the Texan's instructive remarks on that subject. He seemed to have a firmer grasp of its significance than any American I had so far encountered. Unlike the St. Louis pessimist mentioned at the beginning, he was quite cheerful about it. His views may be summarized in the following pithy remark of M. Henri Bergson:

"On a reproché aux Américains d'avoir tous le même chapeau. Mais la tête doit passer avant le chapeau. Faites que je puisse meubler ma tête selon mon goût propre, et j' accepterai pour elle le chapeau de tout le monde. Là n'est pas notre grief contre le machinisme."

## CHAPTER XIV

### CHILDREN

*New Orleans.*

WHEN political philosophers announce their principles and system-makers devise their constitutions, they are apt to overlook the part played by *time*. I mean the fact that no human individual has a fixed status either in society or in the universe, but is continually changing it and becoming a different kind of individual in the process of *growing older* from childhood to age. When, for example, our philosophers discourse about the "people" and their rights, or about "government of the people, by the people and for the people," it will generally be found, if their meaning be closely examined, that they are thinking of the "people" as individuals about the prime of life and in full possession of their powers. But, in most societies, these fully-grown individuals, whom our philosophers make to do duty as the "people," are a minority in the total count, the majority consisting of children and young persons of pre-voting age; to say nothing of those at the other end who are becoming senile. The consequence is that

democracies founded on this limited conception of the "people" tend to become oligarchies of the mature, and "youth movements" such as we now see spreading all over the world, rise up in rebellion against them.

Looking at the matter from this point of view, the doctrine that all men are created equal would seem to require some modifications. A society of equals would be composed of people about the same age; and this, clearly, no human society is or is likely to be. We might expect, therefore, that even in the most democratic societies differences of opinion might arise between the different ages, young, middle-aged and old, as to which of them is entitled to rule the roost. Such a difference of opinion is very clearly marked in America.

Among the evils consequent on Prohibition not the least, nor the least discussed, is the drinking habit which has broken out among young people of both sexes. I am inclined to think that the extent of this has been exaggerated—as such things usually are; but, allowing for that, there can be no doubt that the evil exists on a scale sufficiently large to be a matter of serious concern. College dances, in particular, have a bad reputation in this respect.

The following was told this afternoon to my wife here in New Orleans by a lady who has two daughters at college. She said, as we had often heard before, that it was a common custom at

dances for the "boys" to come provided with hip-flasks of gin or whisky which they offered to their girl partners. She hated the idea of girls drinking anyhow, and had done her best to dissuade her own daughters from the practice: "But young people in these days go their own way; parents have little influence over them." What she most feared, however, was the poisonous quality of the liquor carried by the boys. She therefore made a practice of giving each of the girls, when going to a dance, a flask of *pure* gin, of which she kept a supply in her house for the purpose. "It was the lesser of two evils."

I have had many talks with American parents on this and other aspects of their present difficulties in dealing with the younger generation. Here is the substance of one of them as recorded in my diary. The speaker was an anxious mother of five children, two boys and three girls.

"The highbrows are always lecturing us about the importance of the family, the value of a mother's influence, etc., etc. As you know, 'mother' is the object of a kind of cult in this country; we have our 'Mother's Day,' when the shops get rid of their old stocks as presents for the dear old lady. The 'movies' reek with sob-stuff about 'mother.' You know the kind of plot. The son and heir gets entangled with a bad girl: marries her secretly, or runs off

with her anyhow; the furious father finds it out and cuts him off; 'mother' then intervenes: discovers that the bad girl is an angel, that she supports her aged parents and pays for her brother's education out of the earnings as a prostitute: this brings dad round and the curtain drops with mother and son weeping in one another's arms. All 'mother's' doing. The show is really pornographic, the scenes between the bad girl and the darling boy being quite disgusting; but the sob-stuff about mother satisfies our Puritan instincts and makes us feel good.

"Believe me, it is all skin-deep. We mothers are rapidly losing all influence over our children, and I don't know how we can recover it. We have little or no control over them, whether boys or girls. The schools and the colleges take them out of our hands. They give them everything for nothing, and that is what the children expect when they come home. Their standards and ideals are formed in the school atmosphere, and more by their companions than their teachers. They become more and more intractable to home influence and there is nothing for it but to let them go their own way."

I have heard the same story repeated in many places—"Talked to Mrs. —— about uncontrollable children" is a sentence often recurring in my diary—I find it under entries at Pittsburg, Baltimore, Richmond, New Orleans, San Antonio,

Santa Barbara, San Francisco. My wife also reports it as a constant theme of conversation with her women friends. "What did you talk about?" I sometimes venture to ask her when she returns from one of her lunches or tea parties. "Oh, the old thing—the difficulty of controlling the children. They asked me whether we had the same difficulty in England."

My own experience in this matter, as in many others that concern the human aspects of America, has been varied, and I find it difficult to draw conclusions. I think the statements recorded above represent the prevailing feeling among parents. In some of the houses where I have stayed as a guest I have found the children quite charming in their manners, full of fun and intelligence, easy to make friends with and obviously devoted to their parents. In others the parents and the children seemed to be leading separate lives; the tie between them reduced too little more than the cash-nexus between the children who run up the bill and the parents who "foot it."

Perhaps the Declaration of Independence, which every American child is supposed to be familiar with—I see it hung up conspicuously in all the schools—has something to do with this. They are beginning to act it earlier than Thomas Jefferson expected. Many American boys and girls "declare their independence" of parental authority and assert their inalienable

rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and plenty of money to pursue it with, at a surprisingly early age. The doctrine that all men are created equal can hardly mean that boys of ten or twelve are created equal with their middle-aged fathers, or girls with their mothers. And yet that seems to be the construction that many American children, especially among the well-to-do classes, do put upon it, unconsciously no doubt. Jefferson's idea of "creation" must have been rather vague. At what point in the growth of a human being from infancy to old age can he rightly claim equality with "men" in general? Is there no age limit at the lower end? Such questions, of course, would not arise if all men and women were created full-blown, as Father Adam and Mother Eve were in the Garden of Eden. But they do arise under the more protracted methods of creating human beings which Nature subsequently adopted, and for want of an answer many American parents are now complaining that their children have become uncontrollable. The phenomenon is not confined to America. But, as in the case of so many social tendencies, the decay of family life, which may be obscure and slow elsewhere, is visible and rapid in certain quarters of American Society.

Mr. Adams, in his *Epic of America*, p. 49, mentions an early law of the State of Connecticut "which called for the putting to death of any

boy above sixteen who would not obey his mother," a remarkable instance at so early a date of that curious double tendency in American democracy to resent the interference of the law-maker on the one hand and, on the other, to make laws which would be unenforceable in the most law-abiding of communities. Here, at all events, is evidence that trouble with uncontrollable children is not a new thing in American life. Even in those early days disobedience to maternal authority must have gone to great lengths to call for a penalty so severe. The girls apparently were outside its scope. Whether this means that the girls were more obedient to their mothers than the boys is hard to say. So far as my observation goes they are not more obedient now, their "declaration of independence" being, if anything, more emphatic than that of the boys. Perhaps it was the merciful thought of the Connecticut Fathers that the moral effect of hanging a few boys would be enough to bring the girls to heel.

It was during my last crossing the Atlantic on one of the great liners that I was most impressed by this aspect of American family life. Among the passengers was a large number of children accompanying their parents, most of them of tender age. A more unruly lot I have never encountered. The American lady, who described them to me as "limbs of Satan, whose life consisted of a perpetual yell," was not far

wrong. Through all the hours of the day, from early morning and often till after midnight, they kept up a perpetual rampage about the decks. Almost without exception they were pallid in colour and otherwise rather unhealthy-looking, but their vitality seemed, unhappily, inexhaustible. The efforts of their parents to restrain them, never very forcible, were quite futile. As I studied their ways I seemed to be getting a new light on the phenomenon of "lawlessness" of which one hears so much to-day in all parts of America.

But the independence of American children is a phenomenon with a good as well as an evil side. In contrast to the stories of parents losing influence over their children I have heard many others which tell of children gaining influence over their parents, much to the advantage of the latter. The remarks of the lady quoted above to the effect that the children acquired their habits and standards not in the home but in the school must not be taken to mean that their habits and standards are any the worse on that account. They may be better. And this seems to be happening on a large scale among the children of foreign immigrants who are quick, so I am told, to pick up the self-assertiveness of the native American child.

An interesting instance of this came under my observation in the slum district on the east side of New York. Wandering about in those

dreadful regions one afternoon I found myself in a large "neighbourhood playground," flanked on one side by a "children's library," both playground and library under skilled and admirable supervision. I first inspected the library, crowded with readers and staffed by a group of those wonderful women, who abound in America and find the joy of their lives in social service. I then went out into the playground, now inundated by a flood of children, mostly of foreign born parents, just let out of school—I think there must have been a thousand of them. Without a single exception I could find they were all spotlessly clean, decently clothed and apparently well fed and healthy. I looked in vain for a single dirty face or ragged garment. This struck me as unlike anything I had seen under similar conditions at home, and meeting one of the playground supervisors I said something to her about the pains the mothers of the district must take to keep up so high a standard. "No," she answered, "that is not the real explanation. The fact is that a kind of public opinion has got established among the children, so that if one of them comes dirty to the school or the playground the others immediately drive him off and send him home to get cleaned. That is considered a terrible disgrace. The children have their own standard of cleanliness; the schools have somehow managed to get it into them, and though you may think it strange,

it is literally true that they impose the standard on their homes and compel the mothers to keep them clean."

An instance of a different kind, but illustrating the same beneficent reaction of American youth on its elders, came under my notice in a manufacturing town of 70,000 inhabitants, largely foreign, on the borders of Illinois and Iowa. The "Scout" movement had been started among the boys, with difficulty at first owing to the opposition of the parents, but was going strong and splendidly organized at the time of my visit. The effects of it, said my informant—a trustworthy witness—was apparent not only on the boys, who are completely "made over," but on the homes they come from. They carry back into their homes the standards of decency and order they learn in the camps and "compel" (the word used by my informant in New York) their parents to respect them. He then told me a remarkable story of a disreputable home which had been entirely reformed in this manner by the influence of a Boy Scout fourteen years old. Such things incline one to think that the independence and self-assertiveness of American children is not an unmitigated evil.

On the devil's side of the equation many deplorable facts have to be set down. There is probably no country where the evils of city life weigh heavier on the children and where the temptations offered them as they grow to

adolescence are so vile. "These cities," said Jane Addams, in course of a conversation I had with her one day in Chicago, "are great mills for the destruction of children." According to the statistics of the National Recreation Association only two out of every five of the children in the great cities "have a chance to play." I vividly recall a group of forty or fifty whom I saw one day grubbing about in a heap of rubbish in the "band box" district of Philadelphia, one of the worst slums to be found anywhere on the face of the earth. More miserable and wicked-looking children it would be impossible to imagine: it is a nightmare to remember them. And again in a New Orleans paper I found a statement by a medical authority that 74 per cent of the children attending the public schools of the city were physically defective. Public playgrounds admirably laid out and organized are to be found, but in the greater cities they are inadequate, and often too far away for the swarms of children that need them. Multitudes play in the streets, some of which, in many cities, are closed to through traffic for the purpose on Sundays and at certain hours on other days.

Among cities with an ample provision of supervised children's playgrounds—and there are many such—Springfield, Massachusetts, is noteworthy. One of the finest of these playgrounds—one of the *best* I have ever seen—was the gift to the

city of a private benefactor, a man of great wealth, now an octogenarian. In a very simple and touching speech at a public dinner I heard him tell the story of his benefaction. "One day," he said, "as I was walking along, I saw a woman ordering off some children who were playing on the grass round her house. They went away looking very miserable and some of them began to cry. I walked on: but somehow those children stuck in my mind: so presently I turned round and came back to the place. I found the children sitting on the curb and asked them what they were doing. They said they had no place to play. In a flash it came to me what to do with my property. And I did it next day." A dozen instances more or less resembling this came under my notice in other cities, and may be taken as typical of the way the National Recreation Association of America, now developed far beyond its original form, came into being. Troublesome as his children are, Uncle Sam is very fond of them and means to do the best for them he can. He may be obdurate enough about international debts, but mention the children and his heart softens at once.

## CHAPTER XV

### EDUCATION

*Denver, Colorado.*

WHATEVER may be said in disparagement of American education when judged by the standards of the Old World, there can be no doubt that the public interest in education and the public sense of its importance stand in America at a very high level. All general statements about America, as I have elsewhere noted, are apt to need qualifications, sometimes so many that the original statement comes to nothing, but this about the public interest in education may stand almost unqualified. By diligent search, indeed, one could find in some of the States, especially in the South, benighted regions where education has been neglected and where illiterates abound; and in all the great cities there are ignorant masses who are apathetic about it; though even they seem to be less apathetic than the corresponding masses in Great Britain.

My own testimony, given for no more than it is worth, is this. Of the many topics on which I have spoken in American cities "education" has always been the one to draw the largest and

most eager audiences, and this, I think, would hardly have been the case at home. In these addresses I would sometimes ask, "What is the 'key-industry' of the United States?" and when I answered my own question by the word "education," there would always be a rousing cheer. The impression I have received in these ways, and found confirmed by personal contact with individuals of many types all over the country, is that education is one of the things the American people believe in, aim at, and are prepared to make sacrifices for.

This statement may be confidently placed side by side with current generalizations about America's belief in the "almighty dollar." She does believe in the "almighty dollar"; but she believes in education as well; and her belief in the first is not unaffected by her belief in the second—a point to be borne in mind by those who accuse American education, especially in the universities, of being dominated by the money interest. There is a measure of truth in the accusation, but—as an Irishman once remarked—the domination is not all on *one side*. The millionaires have done much for the colleges; one is staggered by the astronomical figures in which their gifts are reckoned up, and there is no denying the formidable power implied by these colossal benefactions. But the colleges have also done something for the millionaires in giving them a rather different "attitude towards life"

from that connoted by the worship of the almighty dollar. This give-and-take between the material and the spiritual, if not exactly "equal and opposite," is nevertheless a fact to be noted by those who study the relations between the money interest and the education of America. The money has come out of "business," to be sure, and though most of its results in education flow back to the source from which the money came there is generally a residue left over for the things of the spirit. A "School of Business Administration" placed in the midst of a university originally founded to promote the glory of God will get an occasional gleam of heavenly light from the contact, while the promoters of God's glory, on their side, may become, reciprocally, somewhat less unbusinesslike in the pursuit of their ideals. In this way both parties grow wiser by their association; education becoming more practical, while the Mammon of Unrighteousness gets interested in the things of the spirit through the "friendship" offered it by the other side. Such is the give-and-take.

It is as true of American education as it is of British that the general character of it is derived from the top, that is, from the universities. Though American standards differ considerably from British the two agree essentially in being "college born." There, as here, the end and aim of education from first to last is the college degree. There, as here, what the child learns

in a primary school is the first stage of a process whose full value will not be reaped until it comes to fruition in a college education. Arrested short of that crowning glory the pupil may still get some good out of what he has learnt; the three R's are useful even in their elementary forms; but to get the full benefit of these accomplishments they must be pursued till they reach the college stage. The opposite method, which would base education on what is best for the child and then adapt the higher stages so as to lead on naturally from the child stage as its growing-point, has no more hold on the public education of America than it has on that of Britain.

Advocates of this method, indeed, are to be found all over the United States, and I have myself inspected schools both in the East and the West where admirable experiments are being tried out in training children on lines which vitalize their intelligence and awaken their creative powers from the very first. But often, after showing me the astonishing results achieved in these ways, my informant would take me aside and tell me a tragic story. "We bring our pupils," he would say, "to the point you have seen; a point where they are full of promise and from which it would be easy to lead them on. But the stages of their education which follow, instead of developing what we have done for them, kill it out. They enter the educational factory, where everything depends

on their gaining the credits needed to pass them into college. By the time they leave it their minds have become devitalized, crammed only with the book-knowledge needed to get their degrees, and they have lost everything we gave them."

Statements of this kind have been made to me so often, in so many different places and by persons of such weight, that I can hardly avoid interpreting them as signs of a coming revolt against the domination of the colleges. At all events the phenomenon is one which the student of American education cannot afford to overlook. Once more we need to remember the rule, "Judge nothing in America by the point at which it has arrived; judge all things by the direction in which they are moving." At this point they seem to be moving in the direction of revolt against a system even more pernicious in America than in Britain. And more pernicious for this reason; that whereas the habit of valuing a college education in terms of its helpfulness towards getting a job and making money is by no means unknown in British universities, it seems to be much more clearly stamped on the American variety and to spread more widely through the whole system of public education. The fatal idea that nothing is worth learning except for its economic utility has certainly got a firm hold on the minds of all who participate in it from the governors of universities to the

children in the primary schools. To this cause the low standard of American education, in the academic sense of the word, is largely attributable.

Yet even this, deplorable as it may seem to one imbued with Matthew Arnold's idea of culture, is not without its compensations. The specialized efficiency which American education aims at, and indeed succeeds in producing, falls vastly short of a complete human culture, but it compares not unfavourably with the general inefficiency which results from imposing on all young people alike types of education adapted to the social conditions of a bygone age, and for which only a small percentage possesses the necessary aptitudes.

The high schools, which cover the ground of secondary public education in America, are really polytechnics; and many of the great universities are little else. At a recent degree-giving ("Commencement") which I attended at Columbia University, in New York, 5,200 degrees were conferred, in batches running up into hundreds, by the reigning President, and fully nine-tenths of them were distinctly "vocational" in character. In presence of such a phenomenon the analogy to mass production was, of course, obvious, and one could hardly help reflecting that if anything could standardize human beings (fortunately nothing can) this wholesale method would be likely to achieve that result. On the other hand, so long as mass

production continues to be the basis of American industry it is hard to see what other methods education could adopt without becoming hopelessly estranged from the main currents of the national life. Whatever one may think of American civilization in general, and however conscious one may be of the falling-short in American education, there can be little doubt that the two are well adapted one to the other, in the sense that the training given to young people corresponds fairly well to the life the vast majority are likely to lead, though not perhaps to the life an awakened soul would choose for itself, if the choice were given it. If the currents of a nation's life are running in the wrong direction it might seem a good thing, from the reformer's point of view, to set up a type of education in flat opposition to prevailing tendencies. But this, if attempted, would lead to social chaos, and is too much to expect in any case.

From a certain point of view, and one I have found myself constantly taking, not the schools alone but the whole country might be described as one vast polytechnic; perhaps "polytechnic civilization" would be a better name than "industrial civilization" for the stage of evolution through which America is now passing, with all the Western world at her heels. Technique, always in process of further refinement, has imposed itself on everything, invading not only the world of material objects but the world of

human relations, where it has become established under the name of "psychology," a somewhat dangerous foundation to be sure, but much believed in by the technically-minded American. Technique confronts you everywhere; in the imponderables no less than the ponderables; in the churches no less than in the factories; in the wilderness no less than in the city. Indeed there is little exaggeration in saying that the whole country reeks and roars with technique. No wonder that the schools and colleges have a polytechnic complexion.

British visitors who take with them the standards peculiar to our older universities are apt to judge American education unfavourably. That the level of academical attainment in America is generally lower at all stages of the educational process than the corresponding level in Great Britain is a statement hardly to be disputed. I have never met an American educator who would dispute it. Few would deny that if a competition were set up between the youth of the two nations in the construing of Cæsar's *De Bello Gallico* the British side would far outshine the American, but would probably be less successful if the competition turned on explaining the action of a common pump. But these statements may easily be misunderstood. As an adverse judgment on American education I should hesitate to endorse them. I would rather construe them as betokening freedom from what,

after all, is a limited conception of education and even disastrous if pressed too hard; a freedom of which the best use is certainly not being made at the moment, but of which a very different tale may have to be told a generation hence. If it be objected, as it reasonably might, that American education has escaped from the bondage of academical tradition only to fall into the worse bondage of specialized efficiency, the reply would be that the latter bondage is, of the two, the more easy to escape from. And to judge from the tone of the many educational conferences I have attended; from the activities of the National Education Association of America with its 200,000 members; from the literature it circulates on every aspect of the subject; from the changes I have seen in actual process in schools and colleges—to judge from all this I should have no hesitation in saying that the leading minds in American education are bent on escaping from the bondage of specialized efficiency and in a fair way to do so, though somewhat confused, it must be admitted, as to what the next step is to be. There can be no doubt that American education is now in a condition when a great step forward is at least possible, and full of promise in that sense. The fate of America probably depends on the step being wisely taken. Meanwhile those critics who have condemned American education for its academically backward condition would do well to remember that

"there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance"—or think they need none.

Of the changes actually in process four have struck me chiefly. I have not found them everywhere, nor always at the same level of excellence. But I have found them sufficiently often and in a quality good enough to act as pointers to the direction in which advance is taking place.

1. The large, but still inadequate, place assigned to physical education. A professor of Physical Education is to be found in almost every college, and the practice of it is almost universal in the public schools. In many places it is still under the domination of competitive athletics, or crude gymnastic methods, and has far to go before it reaches the point of excellence to which the best practice of Europe has brought it, the point of genuine co-ordination with mental culture. In others, not so many, but still numerous, I have found it fully advanced. The significant thing is that the importance of physical education is now recognized, not only by experts but by the authorities which govern the schools and colleges, as an absolutely essential element of anything worthy to be called education.

2. An increasing tendency to bring the play side of school or college life into the field of education proper, the activities of play-time being regarded not as a mere relief from the

activities of the classroom but as a positive and valuable addition to them. To enlarge upon this would be to repeat what will be said in the chapter on American Recreation.

3. Increasing effort to awaken the creative side and to concentrate on that, rather than on the acquisition of book-learning, as the chief object to be aimed at in the education of the young human being. This movement is most apparent in the schools which deal with children at the earliest stage, and least apparent in the universities. Nevertheless I have found it winning its way, though confronted with innumerable obstacles, all over America, and I have met with college presidents, mostly in the smaller colleges, who are whole-hearted believers in "creative education" and busy in adapting their curricula to its requirements.

4. The growth, outside the schools and colleges, of activities, movements and institutions which are doing educational work of the utmost value and doing it on a great scale and in a multitude of ways. Many of them are in forms familiar in Great Britain, such as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts (so called in America), the Y.M.C.A., Boys' and Girls' Clubs, Arts and Crafts Societies, "Leagues of Youth," and the many forms of the Adult Education Movement. But perhaps the most striking of them all is one to which we have no exact analogy in Great Britain—I refer to the "Community Centres"

which are to be found, often housed in buildings of great beauty, in nearly all American cities both great and small. These Community Centres are precisely what their name implies—real centres for the social life of the neighbourhood, where all classes and all ages assemble, and become transformed from a crowd into a community through common participation in what are known in America as “worth-while activities.” A slight sketch of one of them will be found in a coming chapter on American Recreation, which, as there indicated, is becoming more and more impressed with educational aims. What strikes one most in these non-official movements, especially in the Community Centres, is the firm hold they have on the idea of creative education. Their total effect on the general educational trend in America is immense. They constitute one of the best and most promising elements in American education. To overlook them would be to leave one's account hopelessly incomplete.

Of all the “conferences” in this conference-ridden country—and I have had some experience of that aspect of it—by far the most interesting of those I have attended, and the most inspiring, were devoted to education. In point of intelligence, breadth of outlook, profitable discussion and enthusiasm for the cause they reveal the American conference-spirit at its best. In none of the others have I seemed to be so near to the

real heart of America, and I have always come away with the feeling that if there is any country in the world where the attempt to set up an educational State on the lines dreamed of by Plato might be made with some promise of success, America is assuredly the land for the experiment. To the Englishman, accustomed to educational conferences at home, the experience is a somewhat strange one. At first he may have some difficulty in recognizing that education is what the conference is conferring about. There is something in the atmosphere that will remind him of a religious revival, and next to nothing that he would expect in an assemblage of pedagogues. He will soon discover that what these eager men and women have at heart is nothing less than the future of their country, which they are all intent on building up into some sort of Kingdom of God, vaguely conceived, perhaps, and yet quite clearly a Kingdom of the Spirit. Here, at last, American "uplift," so tedious and empty in other connexions, seems to have acquired a real purpose and meaning. The experience may be commended to those who know America only as a country "devoted to material ends."

It must be said of American education, more emphatically perhaps than of any other topic dealt with in this book, that no summary statement can do justice to the multiplicity and variety of its activities. I have tried to avoid such state-

ments in writing this chapter, but on reading what I have written a doubt crosses my mind as to whether I have been guarded enough. In the matter of "standards," especially, I fear I may have given too complete an endorsement to the common verdict which places the American standard lower than the British, at least as regards the universities. Qualifications are certainly needed; so many indeed that a full rehearsal of them would fill a chapter longer than this. I will mention only one which may serve as a sample of all.

While some of the great universities have committed the fatal error of including in their curricula "everything that anybody wants to know," thereby losing the character proper to a university and becoming a crowd or collection of unrelated "schools," each having a standard of its own, perhaps, but the totality having none —while some of the larger ones have thus surrendered the unitary aim which should characterize a university, there are others, mostly smaller, where the traditions of sound learning are faithfully upheld and the elements of a universal culture firmly held together. Such universities I have found in places as far apart as Pennsylvania and Oregon. In the multitude of American colleges both extremes are to be met with: superficiality at one end, thoroughness at the other. It may be that America has need of both types of university in her present stage of social evolution.

But I imagine that when the audit of her higher education is cast on the Day of Judgment, the type of university I have last described will get its passport before the other.<sup>1</sup>

There is one other point, not unimportant in view of its implications, that must be set down to the credit of American education. The coxcomb, or conceited fool, is not one of its products. That the type is never to be found amid the 125 million inhabitants of the United States is more, of course, than I am able to affirm; I can only bear witness that in all my wanderings I have never encountered it. Of loud boasters I have met many, though never as a majority; of people who over-affirm their individualities, even to the extent of becoming bores, I have met not a few, though not more than one would expect to meet in a nation brought up on the Declaration of Independence. But the coxcomb belongs to neither of these categories; he is a much more offensive person; and him I have utterly failed to find. Even in the pages of American fiction I have looked for him in vain; the writers seem to be unacquainted with the type or to know of it only by hearsay. On one occasion when I mentioned this impression to an American friend he seemed not to understand what I meant and asked me to define exactly what a coxcomb is. It was clear that he had never met one in the flesh.

<sup>1</sup> This must not be taken to mean that all the large universities belong to the first type and all the small ones to the second. By no means.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DARK PROBLEMS

“ About her middle round  
A cry of hell-hounds never ceasing barked. . . .  
Nor uglier follow the night-hag when, called  
In secret, riding through the air she comes,  
Lured by the sinell of infant blood, to dance  
With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon  
Eclipses at their charms.”

*Chicago, April, 1932.*

I COULD fill this book, and indeed a much larger one than this, with stories I have heard or read, and, to a lesser extent, with the description of scenes and events I have myself witnessed which, taken in their totality, would constitute a damning indictment of American civilization; hunger and misery, violence and cruelty, rampant bribery, corrupt justice, cheating and hypocrisy, oppressions and suppressions, ruthless exploitation and shameless malfeasance, luxury gone mad and vice in outrageous forms. Doubtless some such picture could be painted in many another “civilized” country. But would the shadows anywhere else stand in so sharp a contrast to the high lights?

I have met with many Americans who seem obsessed by these things and can talk of little

else. No wonder. The rage and bitterness of the communists are perfectly intelligible and the mockery of the cynics hardly less so. There is a sense in which one might say that America is a place of torment, not merely to those who endure the buffets of fate or suffer wrong at the hands of their fellows, but to those who stand by helpless and see what is going on.

And yet, as I have said before, heaven is as well represented here as hell, and purgatory as either.

He who would understand America must take his journey through all three, passing judgment on none of them until he has seen the significance of the other two. He must study the three in their inter-relations, as he may find them here in Chicago, co-present and interlocked; be careful not to draw his conclusions only from what he sees or hears either of any one or of all three; correlate his day-view with his night-view and not be content with a mere *view* of either, or with the rumours they severally emit.

It needs to be remembered that the bulk of civilization's miseries are hidden away in holes where the passer-by cannot see them. The same is true of its vices, which show their faces in the street but find out a secret place for their deeds. Except for stray wanderers, the children of despair avoid the light of day; they huddle in dark cellars and crowded tenements; those you see on the doorsteps are the less despairing. The sick, the mad, the dying, the naked children

and the women in travail are all indoors; they are not for show, and you need eyes that can penetrate brick walls to realize their existence. And as for the vices of mankind, was it not said of old that "men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil"?

Can the same be said of the finer aspects of civilization? Not with the same emphasis, not with so few reservations. Health is less hidden than sickness, virtue than vice, beauty than ugliness. Many noble deeds done by the right hand are, indeed, carefully hidden from the left but, on the whole, "men do not hide their light under a bushel;" and it is well they do not. Whether one is walking among palaces or slums one may repeat, with comfort to oneself, the familiar lines of Gray:

*"Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear,  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."*

But what hides these lovely children of the light is rather circumstance than modesty. If you came to look at them they would not seek to run away and hide themselves in holes. But misery would; so would despair; so would vice. In their extremest forms these things call on the rocks to hide them and the hills to cover them. Death also is secretive. If the dying of men were

as visible as their living to what different conclusions should we all come! Placed in the dark perspective of that night-view, how much that we think and say about "modern life," American or other, would suddenly change from true to false!

But here a distinction must be made. Along with the tendency of the dark side to hide itself in an "underworld," and so make itself darker, there is among men an effort to bring it to light and to pass their time in contemplating it. If the bright side shows more plainly in the streets and public-places, the dark side figures more largely in the news. The killing of men is no longer a public spectacle, as it was in the gladiatorial shows, but a sensational murder adds tens of thousands to the circulation of the newspapers. As I sit in my armchair in this hotel reading an account of the latest gang fight in the underworld, am I not passing my time in much the same way as the Roman of old who sat in the amphitheatre and watched the blood flow in the arena? I like to think not. I like to think that I read such things by way of provoking myself to oppose them, by way of rousing my moral forces to make head against the evil in the world. But is that true? I am not so sure. And so with the news in general.

Is the news that I read in the *Chicago Tribune* to-day truly and fairly representative of what went on in Chicago, or in the world, yesterday?

I find that it leans on the whole to the dark side, or, to be fair, more to the dark than the bright. If it leaned as strongly to the bright as it does to the dark should I be as interested in it as I am? I hesitate in the answer. And more. If there were no other forces at work in society than those whose doings are recorded there, and they are by no means all of the flagitious sort, would society exist at all? Would the United States exist at all? I think they would not. The forces that keep society going from day to day, that maintain the United States in existence, have no recorder. These unrecorded forces, which no reporter, male or female, is sent to "cover," what are they? They consist of the silent heroisms displayed—no, not displayed but undisplayed—by millions of men and women standing to their jobs and "doing their bits" in thousands of forms. But for them, we should have found no food on our breakfast tables this morning, no heat in our furnaces, no shelter over our heads; the babies would have no milk and the Twentieth Century Express from New York would not have arrived. But for them, there would be no "social system" good or bad, capitalistic, communistic or any other. That is the bright side.

The dark side of America I shall not attempt to describe. The description of it is beyond my power and against my inclination. I know that it exists, and here in Chicago I am more

conscious of it than in other cities. In any case a description of it here would be unnecessary. It has been done, perhaps overdone, by American writers, romantically by Upton Sinclair in his novels, statistically by Theodore Dreiser in his *Tragic America*—to name but two among many.

I am not in a position to question the truth of what these writers allege; nor am I able to confirm it except by reporting hearsay, which is poor evidence, or by recording “impressions,” which is hardly better. But of this I am sure—that if what these writers tell us were the *whole* truth about the United States there would be no United States, or even Disunited States, no States at all, in fact, to write about either romantically or statistically. I will only venture to set down a few reflections which have occurred after reading a mass of these damning accusations and comparing it with my own experience.

Assuming all they tell us about America to be true, there must be somewhere an immense counteracting force to maintain American civilization as a going concern. Hence, the more one is staggered by these revelations of iniquity, the more one’s reverence rises for this unnamed, hidden thing in the background that manages, somehow, to carry on, in spite of all the sons of Belial are doing to turn the country into a hell. I have seen the sons of Belial at work. But I have also met Jane Addams.

Were the “tragic America” described by Mr.

Dreiser the whole America, or the real America, I should not want to reform it, as Mr. Dreiser does, by substituting communism for capitalism, or alternatively by setting up a dictator. I should regard it as irredeemably past reforming or even praying for. With a community composed, it would seem, of knaves exploiting fools, and fools submitting to be exploited by knaves, nothing can be done but leave it to its fate. The reaction to such a picture is not reforming zeal but despair, profound and cynical. With such material to build with, nothing can be built. The change from capitalism to communism, or to any other "ism" would merely be a change from one mess to another, from one hell to a hotter, and the dictator, were he to appear, would be betrayed to-night and "bumped off" to-morrow morning. Reformatory treatment is out of the question for a culprit so deeply stained by every imaginable meanness and crime. The death sentence alone is fitting, and the sooner nature—sternest of hanging judges—puts on the black cap the better for the world.

That Mr. Dreiser's picture of Tragic America is widely accepted as true by Americans, and that cynicism rather than reforming zeal, results from it, thereby defeating its own object, I have heard much to prove. The following trifle may serve as an illustration.

This morning I fell into conversation with the barber (indistinguishable from a college man)

who was operating on me, with high technique and elaborate ritual, in the basement of the hotel. We began talking about the Chicago underworld and I said something about "gangsters." "Gangsters!" he said, "have you ever met a man in this country who's *not* a gangster?" I said I thought I had met several who hardly answered to that description. "Well, you're lucky," he answered. "But let me tell you this, sir. Those you think are not gangsters are the worst gangsters of the bunch"—and he ran off a list of names beginning with a President of the United States and ending with a prominent preacher. "And you," I asked, "are you a gangster?" "By God, I am! In a way, of course. It's the only way to get a living in this country. Yes, sir. We're all in the same game from the biggest noise in the United States to the nigger who just shined your boots." And he concluded with the following anecdote.

"There was an Englishman, like you, visiting Chicago and one of our citizens was taking him round to show him the sights. As they were walking on Michigan Avenue, at the time of day when it's most crowded, the Englishman says to his friend: 'I've heard a lot about your gangsters, but I've never seen one.' 'Haven't you?' says his friend, 'that's strange.' 'Can you show me one?' says the Englishman. Just then a funeral came down the Avenue. 'Do

you see that coffin<sup>1</sup>?' says the friend, 'well, the man in that coffin is the only man now on the Avenue who's *not* a gangster. And why? Because he's a corpse. Another gangster shot him.'"

Such was the barber's "attitude towards life," whatever that may mean. We are all in the game: so why make a fuss? But for those who lack the barber's philosophy the conclusion will be different.

I was walking to-day on Chicago's waterfront, the shining expanse of Lake Michigan on the one side; on the other, miles of stately buildings well set back from the Lake, "the finest skyline in the world." It seemed to me a mask. Behind these splendours roll the four infernal rivers,

*"Abhorred Styx, the flood of deadly hate;  
Sad Acheron, of sorrow black and deep;  
Cocytus, named of lamentation loud  
Heard on the rueful stream; fierce Phlegethon  
Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage."*

And beyond these four another, of whose forbidden waters a draught would often be welcome in the midst of these dark problems:

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps he said "casket." The "long box" usually goes by that name in America. In like manner an undertaker is a "mortician" and an undertaker's shop "a funeral home." Which makes the affair more comfortable.

*“Far off from these, a slow and silent stream  
Lethe, the river of oblivion, rolls  
Her watery labyrinth, whereof who drinks  
Forthwith his former state and being forgets,  
Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.”*

But of Lethe the damned are not suffered to drink:  
nor am I.

## CHAPTER XVII

### AMERICAN RECREATION

#### *Kansas City.*

FROM the dark thoughts of the preceding chapter it is a relief to turn to the subject of this. We are now on the bright side and about to consider one of the most promising currents in American life. For six months past I have been wandering by the banks of that cheerful stream and seen many a desert place, in great cities and elsewhere, converted by its waters into gardens and fruitful fields.

The recreation of the people both juvenile and adult has become to a high degree in many American cities *a matter of public concern*. All over the country I have encountered large and enlightened groups of men and women eagerly discussing "the problem of leisure," now brought into unwelcome prominence in the form of enforced leisure consequent on economic depression, and otherwise known as "unemployment." What is to be done with the vast amounts of time and human energy released by the applications of science to industry?

The question indeed is by no means new in

America. But it has taken a new form. When I was there in 1929, at the height of the boom, the question was already being ventilated. But the leisure people were then talking about was the leisure that results from assured prosperity, the leisure of a community where poverty has been abolished and everybody has plenty of money resulting from highly paid work and plenty of time to spend it in—in other words the leisure of the well-to-do. This, though difficult enough, was simple compared with what was to follow. Enormously more difficult is the problem of dealing with a state of society, in which, owing to the economies of time and energy effected by machinery, the proportions of labour and leisure seem likely to be reversed, labour becoming the short part of life and leisure the long—a change in the social structure to which the ever-increasing unemployment seemed to point. Under these conditions the centre of the social problem shifts from the labour field to the leisure field, and instead of asking as before “How shall we spend our leisure so as to have the best effects on our labour,” we now ask rather “What forms of labour are most conducive to the interests of leisure ?” In other words, if, as high authorities predict, the effect of machinery were to reduce the average working time to five days a week and four or five hours a day, leaving all the remaining time for the community to do what it liked with, it seems pretty clear that the fate

of civilization would depend primarily on the use that was made of leisure. Whether or no it is permissible for men and women to play the fool in their leisure when they have very little to dispose of, leisure on the vast scale now in prospect could hardly be spent in that way without disastrous consequences to society at large. And certainly a type of education which prepared people only for the short part of life represented by labour and left them unprepared for the long part represented by leisure, would be wholly inadequate to meet the needs of society under these new conditions.

When I returned to the United States in 1931, in the midst of economic disaster, I found that thoughtful Americans everywhere were opening their eyes to this larger aspect of the leisure problem. Interest in the question seemed to me more widely spread than in Great Britain. In every city I visited were groups of men and women prepared to consider it as a social problem of the first magnitude, full of difficulties, and deeply involved with other problems of economics, ethics and especially of education.

Nor was the interest confined to the philosophically-minded or highly-educated part of the community. The people at large seemed to share it. Wherever my lectures were thrown open to the public (oftener they took the form of semi-private conferences with leading citizens), the announcement that I was to speak on

“leisure” or “recreation” or “the unity of work and play,” or some such title, was enough to draw an eager audience running into thousands; nor was there much difference in this respect between New England and Texas or between Utah and Tennessee. Among educators especially, from college presidents to teachers in the common schools, I found that interest in the matter ran very high; and often after “making my talk,” I would be seized upon by men or women full of apostolic ardour and carried off to see institutions where experiments in education for leisure were being tried out on the lines I had been advocating, such as the Community Centre of Westchester County, the Martha Berry Schools in the mountains of Georgia, the Cranbrook School near Detroit, the Hampton Institute for negroes in Virginia, or that wonderful “Play-ground for the Soul” the Graphic Sketch Club of Philadelphia, founded by Samuel Fleisher<sup>1</sup>—to name but a few among many. Indeed, after seeing these things, the feeling would sometimes come over me that I was engaged in the operation known as “carrying coals to Newcastle.” Not that my American friends put it in this way. Even when I had described something they were actually doing, without my being aware they were doing it, as something they *ought* to do, they were glad to have it described and would do me all

<sup>1</sup> I have described it more fully in my book, *The Education of the Whole Man*, Chapter VI.

kinds of honour for describing it. Once, indeed, after venturing to interfere in the domestic policy of the United States so far as to tell an audience in California (or was it in Florida, where I said the same thing?) that Uncle Sam would show himself one of the wisest potentates in the universe if he were to set that State apart and develop it as an "educational State" on the lines advocated by Plato, a gentleman said to me, "You don't seem to know that some of us have been thinking of that for a long time. It's not a new idea in these parts."

Among the people who invariably formed part of my audience were a number of official or semi-official men and women, bearing such titles as City Commissioner of Recreation, Supervisor of Recreation, Supervisor of Dramatics and Folk Dancing, Supervisor of Swimming, Playground Engineer, Camp Manager, Director of Arts and Crafts, Director of Community Games, Field Worker of the National Recreation Association. Many of these people we came to know intimately and to count among the most valued of our American friends, as they are certainly among the most practical of American idealists, combining their ideals with business-like method and the sportsmanlike spirit. Not all indeed were on the same level of competence; here and there a rumour would reach me of an appointment due to political jobbery—that curse of American cities; but many (most, I think) had been well

trained both in the principles and technique of their work<sup>1</sup> and showed a devotion to it, a belief in its value, and a skill in achieving it that never failed to arouse our admiration. Through their assiduity in showing me their work I became fairly well acquainted with that remarkable social phenomenon—the municipal recreation of America, referred to at the opening of this chapter as one of the most promising currents of American life.

The National Recreation Association of America, with headquarters in New York, is an independent institution supported by private contributions from all parts of the country. The Board of Directors is composed of men and women eminent in many walks of life and its executive, housed in offices in Fourth Avenue, do their work, as I have good reason to know, with the enthusiasm of those who feel themselves engaged in the public service, and with the competence proper to it. The field workers or other representatives of the Association cover almost the whole of the United States; they report to headquarters on the recreational facilities in their "territories"; where these are inadequate they stir up public opinion to improve them; and are everywhere at hand to confer with municipal authorities, school managers, leaders of boys'

<sup>1</sup> Admirable training in "Recreational Leadership" can be obtained, for example, at the Y.M.C.A. College at Springfield, Mass., or at the School established by the National Recreation Association in New York.

and girls' clubs, organizers of community centres, public librarians, promoters of music and the arts in general, as to the best means of utilizing the forces at their disposal. One of their main functions is to co-ordinate existing activities, which are often confused and wasteful; the municipality, the schools, the churches, the young people's clubs, the musical societies, the arts and crafts societies, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., and many others engaged in "solving the leisure problem."

In several cities I found that the local representative of the Association had persuaded the education authorities to place the whole of the school buildings and playgrounds at his disposal for public recreation at the times when they were not in use for school purposes. Visiting one of the schools in the evening I found it crowded with people of all ages and conditions and a score of "activities" going on; physical instruction for the young men and women; rhythmic dancing; an excellent orchestra of local talent; "practice golf" with an instructor in charge; community singing; arts and crafts of many kinds; "chequers" for the old men; a lorry load of books from the public library and a bright-eyed woman giving advice to readers; winding up with a big "social dance" in which everybody took part from the "kiddies" to the octogenarian; and a corps of boys and girls ready at the stroke of eleven to clear up and leave all spick and span for

to-morrow's school. And all through I observed the alert Supervisor of Recreation going swiftly from group to group. All the strings are in his hand.

When describing such things to my English friends I often get some such reply as this: "Oh yes, it all sounds very fine. But it merely illustrates the American passion for organization and the way they overdo it. The idea of supervising recreation is absurd. People don't want to be supervised when they are enjoying themselves. All you need for a public playground is a pleasant open place where the people can roam about and do what they like, with a policeman or two to see they don't get into mischief. As for the children—just turn 'em loose to play their own games in their own way."

Well, I know a good many public playgrounds in England which appear to be managed on these liberal principles. Comparing them with the scores of supervised playgrounds I have seen in America, I have no hesitation in saying which of the two methods gives the better results, in morals, sociability and fun. Indeed I have been able to make the comparison in America itself.

When I was in Kansas City I found the public playgrounds, of which there are thirteen, in a rather miserable condition. It was a fine afternoon when I went the round of them. A few desultory baseball games were going on; children were quarrelling or tumbling over one another; gangs of loafers were looking on or "milling

round," and there was a good deal of horse play among the big boys and girls. I noticed also that all the shrubberies had been recently cut down so that the whole place looked bare and desolate. This was so different from what I was accustomed to see elsewhere that I asked my conductor for an explanation. Whereupon he told me the following story. "Not so long ago," he said, "those playgrounds were as good as any in America and the scene of the city's happiest life. But owing to difficulties caused by the economic depression the Municipality got rid of their Supervisor of Recreation and now there is nobody to look after the playgrounds but a few old men dressed up in uniforms and armed with sticks. Since then they have steadily gone down ; all the fine games, that hundreds of people used to take part in, have died out. Some of them have become haunts of vice so that decent mothers won't let their children go near them. You don't need to know much about unsupervised playgrounds in big cities to understand why the shrubberies have had to be cut down. And I can tell you this: the crime that is hatched among young people in those playgrounds is costing our City annually ten times the salary of the Supervisor of Recreation." And he gave me some statistics about the cost of juvenile delinquency in Kansas City which I have forgotten, though I remember thinking they were terrible.

That evening I addressed a large audience on

“The Educational Value of Public Recreation.” I said not a word of the story I had heard about the playgrounds of the city. What I did describe was a public playground known to me at home—unsupervised as so many of them are—where somewhat similar conditions prevail. The whole audience knew at once what I was referring to and gave a cheer when I drew the obvious moral. Since then I have heard that a group of the citizens have got together and provided the means for furnishing the playgrounds with skilled supervisors. There are splendid people in Kansas City; though I confess the place gave me the horrors as I wandered about the back streets and the stockyards, where “damaged humanity” seemed even more abundant on the sidewalks than I have noticed elsewhere; such impressions, however, need to be kept in their proper place. About “damaged humanity” I had a good deal to say in the course of my address and the audience again applauded when I described the recreation movement as a campaign against that evil. The citizens of Kansas City had evidently been thinking about it. A lady who spoke to me afterwards said “You have put your finger on the danger spot of American life. Unless we can stop the human damage that is going on in our cities America will go to the dogs, no matter which party wins the next presidential election.” I remembered that I had often made a similar observation at home.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### “THE SUNSHINE CITY”

#### *St. Petersburg, Florida.*

From Kansas City I will change the scene to a city much smaller and very differently conditioned —St. Petersburg on the west coast of Florida, a pleasure resort mainly, less splendid than Miami and Palm Beach to the south, which we had also visited, but peopled, we thought, with happier faces. Here the climatic conditions are all on the side of our good friend the City Director of Recreation. St. Petersburg calls itself the “Sunshine City” and the proprietor of the local newspaper has made an offer to distribute his paper free every day in the year the sun fails to make his appearance before noon: for four hundred days there has been no free circulation when we were there. The Post Office functions in the open air. Outside the part belonging to the parcel post are stalls where well-dressed women, furnished with paper and string, stand ready to tie up your parcels for a few cents. For example, you have made the mistake (as I did) of bringing a heavy overcoat to St. Petersburg; you place it before one of these ladies, and in two

minutes it is handed back to you ready to be despatched to the place where you are more likely to need it. You then enter into conversation with the lady or rather, you being English, she enters into conversation with you; tells you that she graduated at such and such a college; how much her takings have been this morning and yesterday (a considerable sum); that she is saving up for a trip to England next year; can you recommend her a good boarding-house in London? "And is that lady your wife? and how old is she? my! how well you English wear! But here's another lot to be tied up. Good-bye (shakes hands). Good-bye, honey (this to my wife). Come again. In St. Petersburg we like to see your face not your back. Yes, sir: you did well to send off that overcoat. You won't want it here. And now, madam (to the newcomer with an armful of purchases), for your lot. All those! My, you've been spending a lot of money. I'd like to be the woman you're sending that cute little thing to. Guess that set you back seven bucks at least." In this uniformly friendly country you will find the St. Petersburg people among the friendliest and the most cheerful in their friendliness. Those who think that all the small cities of America are exact copies of Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* will find, on coming to St. Petersburg, that they have made a mistake. America is a large place. But I am anticipating.

At the station we are met by the Director of Music and Community Singing, and on arrival at the hotel by the proprietor, a strong supporter of public recreation, who at once informs us that we are to be his guests during the period of our stay. "An honour, sir, to entertain a guest with a mission like yours." A few minutes later arrives the Director of Recreation himself, a gentleman all fire and electricity, who promises to show me next day the work of his life; and with him his friend the Mayor (who is to preside at my meetings); the City Superintendent of Education; a clergyman who declares that the Recreation Movement is the next best thing in the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ—"Yes, sir, and a part of it, too"—and a reporter from the newspaper which has challenged the sun. Such is the manner of our welcome to the Sunshine City.

The day is Sunday, and in the afternoon we have a sample of Community Singing as they practise it every Sunday afternoon in St. Petersburg. The scene is a vast auditorium at the end of the pier; some 4,000 people of all ages have come to sing. Looking out from the windows—the place seems to be all windows—we watch the many yachts sailing hither and thither on the wine-dark waters of the Gulf of Mexico, their sails gleaming white in the sunshine; the pelicans wading and gobbling on the sea margins; hundreds and hundreds of seemingly naked

human bodies sunbathing on the beaches, and behind them cars, hardly less numerous, parked in mile-long rows.

And now the Director of Music gets to work. In an aside he informs me that "these people must be made to laugh before you can make them sing." So he has his string of stories ready, a story to introduce every song. One story, which I don't quite understand, refers to ourselves, "two English visitors;" but the jolly crowd understands and roars with laughter on hearing it; we are then bidden to step to the front of the platform and show ourselves; which we do, and are greeted with thundering cheers. The singing follows in a hurricane, vigorously conducted by the skilful Director who, on the singing going flat for a moment, instantly stops it, fires a joke at the repentant singers, and sets them off again *fortissimo*; some of the songs religious (as befits a Sunday afternoon), none vulgar, and "Drink to me only with thine eyes" clearly the favourite. Then, as an interlude, we have "the Harmonica Orchestra," or concert on the mouth organ. From remarks the Director lets fall to me in asides, I think he regards this as his masterpiece; the performers are rescued hooligans, for our Director, man of many jokes as he is, has great ideals and takes his life work very seriously, as the best jokers always do. The mouth organs play melodiously and we find ourselves a little emotionalized as we listen; but the Director

explains that this is only his second best team and that he has one hooligan, absent to-day, who can bring the tears to your eyes, as the playing of his second best team almost does with me. We end up with universal hilarity and handshakings with as many of the 4,000 as we can reach from the platform.

Next day the Director of Recreation, partner in good works with the Director of Music, takes me in hand and proceeds to show me the work of *his* life. Here are scores of acres (I forget how many) of land once waste, which our Director, expert in "cutting and filling" and the balance thereof, has retrieved from the wilderness and turned into the beautiful playing ground we see before us, lustrous and palm shaded; and yonder are scores of acres more still waste—in a few years our man of fire and electricity will have them, too! As we approach the place—Lake Mirror Park is the fitting name of it—he explains how a Recreation Engineer goes to work. You give him fifty acres of waste land—or any sort of land you like—you send him a big bunch of serviceable unemployed to do the digging and levelling, and by this time next year, thanks to his cutting and filling "technique," your fifty waste acres shall be a paradise.

And here we are at the "Old Folks'" part of it. "See that bunch of old fellows playing baseball? Well, that's the Three Quarter Century Club of St. Petersburg. Heard of the Century Club in

New York? This beats it. Limited to men over 75 years of age: not a man playing on that field, sir, under 75 and the oldest 101—that tall guy who's just making his run. Come along; I'll introduce you to him." We descend and pass through the uproarious crowd watching the old fellows at play. I, too, watch and wonder and laugh with the crowd. The game done, I am introduced to the centenarian. "You an Englishman? Shake. I'm a Scot—born in Auld Reekie." I congratulate him on his running. "Waal, we don't play as fast as once we did, but we get lots of fun kiddin' one another." I am introduced to another—a young fellow of eighty and a wicked old pagan by the look of him, with a hip flask sticking out of his pocket. "You bet: I mean to get every drop of joy out of life—right up to the last, sir. Danced till two o'clock this morning, and here on time for the opening of the game! Know the British West Indies? That's where I come from. And that's where this comes from," and he slaps his hip pocket.

We leave the Old People's Paradise and enter Lake Mirror Park. Here is a multitude of people, men and women, perhaps 3,000 of them, playing all the outdoor games of America—acre after acre laid out in "batteries" of tennis courts, bowling alleys, quoit pitches, baseball diamonds, shuffle boards and other such inventions, some of denominations unknown to me; while under

the palms are groups playing chequers, dominoes, cards and chess. "We have a good standard of play for every game," says my conductor. "Nothing left to chance. No fooling, but real play. Gambling not allowed. Our idea is to get the whole crowd into the game. And you see we've done it." Every group, I observe, has its leader acknowledged or unacknowledged; I am introduced to the President of this, the Secretary of that, the star player of another. At every group somebody will invite me to join the game. I join one of them, play for an hour and make half a dozen pleasant acquaintances. My partner is from Springfield, Illinois; after the game he and I sit under a palm and discuss fundamentalism, which he doesn't hold with. Last, I visit the bowling alleys, a score of them arranged in a "battery." Here I am at once noticed as a newcomer and invitations to join the game shower on me from all sides. Many pause in their game to shake hands or give me a friendly slap on the back. Finally I fall into a serious conversation with a gentleman who has just finished his game; he ends with the following remark: "In this place, sir, we make the brotherhood of man a reality. And I tell you we do it a damned sight better than the churches." Which criticism of our ecclesiastical institutions I think it better to leave unanswered.

As I departed from the city friendly voices repeated the formula which I had heard from the

lady with the paper and string: "In St. Petersburg we like to see your face, not your back"; and all night long, as I lay half-asleep in the train that was carrying me from Florida to New Orleans, the wheels of the Pullman beneath me seemed to be singing a jolly old French song:

*"Sur le pont d'Avignon  
Tout le monde y danse . . .  
Les beaux messieurs font comme ça . . .  
Les belles femmes font comme ça . . .  
Et les capuchins font comme ça . . .  
Sur le pont d'Avignon  
Tout le monde y danse en rond."*

## CHAPTER XIX

### A HINT FOR MUNICIPAL POLICY

*San Francisco.*

MUNICIPAL government in America has an evil reputation. Lord Bryce described it as the weakest spot in American democracy—a description quoted to me with emphatic approval by the Mayor of Detroit in the course of a conversation I had with that enlightened gentleman on the distressful state of the universe in the year of grace 1932. But here again we must be careful not to generalize too hastily. While the government of some American cities, great ones, too, is corrupt and inefficient to a degree which suggests the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah as a fitting end to it all, others, like Milwaukee and Cincinnati, have cleaned out their Augean stables, set their house in order and put their governments on a footing that makes them an example to mankind. And this, I think, may be fairly said; in spite of the fact that some of these city governments have fallen into such a condition that democracy might well be an invention of the enemy of the human race, most of them show concern with matters which municipal govern-

ment at home is too little concerned with. It is of one of these matters that I am about to write.

In the course of my travels I have collected a vast amount of literature, official and other, bearing on the "recreational activities" (the phrase oftenest used) of some 50 cities large and small, scattered through most of the States of the Union—annual reports of City Recreation Commissions, recreational surveys of cities by field workers of the National Association, independent reports of schools, clubs, community centres and other institutions devoted to arts and crafts of many kinds, music ranking among the chief, and speeches innumerable by public men (including President Hoover) in support of the Recreation Movement.

The state of things revealed by this literature is far from uniform. Some parts of it strike a note of triumphant exultation (characteristically American but not unjustified) over what has been accomplished; others deplore existing deficiencies and call for reform. The American passion for statistics is apparent throughout, figures, averages, graphs, charts, costs worked out to the minutest detail fill page after page—tiresome, perhaps, to the Britisher, accustomed as he is to muddling through, but a clue, be it remembered, which the American mind demands, not without reason, to guide it through the labyrinths of this perplexing universe; for the American could no more cultivate his soul (or his neighbour's)

without a sheet of statistics before him than he could digest his dinner without a drink of ice-water. But taking this literature all together, with the exultations and despairs, the statistics of things done and the statistics of things needing to be done, taking it also in conjunction with what my own eyes have revealed to me in a hundred places, we have here a striking confirmation of what was said before, that popular recreation in America is a matter of public interest, of public policy and of public planning; by no means a thing to be left to chance as though it could safely look after itself, but a thing to challenge the thoughts of the best minds and to be provided for as an important concern of the whole community, in fact a vital element of public welfare in general. And perhaps I may be forgiven for adding that it seems to me a strange thing that among the many books that have been written to interpret American life to European readers not one, so far as I know, has dwelt on this aspect of it, nor seen its significance as a reaction from other tendencies that are evident to everybody. Even M. Siegfried has not a word to say about it.

From the mass of literature just alluded to I will select, as typical of many, the Annual Report of the Recreation Commission of the City and County of San Francisco.

Attending first to the picturesque, we observe on the frontispiece a full-page photograph of

His Excellency the Governor of the State, and His Honour the Mayor of San Francisco. They appear in the picture as a well-matched pair of jolly pagans, their large heads firmly poised on proportionately powerful bodies, joyfully exhaling the spirit of a land where nature is lavish of her good gifts, including a wide choice of wholesome victuals enriched with vitamins of every recognized denomination. His Excellency's arm is fraternally laid on His Honour's shoulder, their faces beaming with smiles so radiant that they seem to penetrate, not the Recreation Movement alone, of which both Excellency and Honour are noted supporters, but the whole universe; affable gentlemen, I warrant you, with many a pleasant story to refresh the dry places of official oratory and as good fellows as you are likely to meet on the longest day's march. A cheerful fraternity, truly American, is the keynote of the picture.

Passing on from this animating introduction, we find a picture of San Francisco's City Hall, "one of the most beautiful in the world"—an intimation, this, that recreation in San Francisco is a civic affair—and so on through pictures of tennis and baseball played at night on fields artificially illuminated, of a crowd of "fair players playing fair" at Funston, of 8,000 costumes "created and stored" by the Dramatic Department, of intended playgrounds as they were 25 years ago and the same playgrounds after our Recreation Engineer has taken them

in hand, of folk dances, hiking parties, young people's orchestras, mothers' glee clubs, golf academies, golf courses, swimming pools with "twenty little mermaids ready for the plunge," mountain camps with accommodation for hundreds, and much else of like joyful import and encouraging suggestiveness.

Turning now to the letterpress we learn the meaning of all this. The Recreation Commission of San Francisco and County is engaged in promoting 79 distinct kinds of "recreational activity," ranging from "hopscotch" up to the fine arts, every one under skilled supervision and drawing upon the public funds for the wherewithal. For this purpose the Commission employs a staff of 210 trained specialists, whose work is distributed over 29 playground departments, including 18 school playgrounds, 10 community centres and a mountain camp; for which services it spent \$850,000 during the year, providing thereby for the recreation of 4,286,820 men, women and children, of whom 3,078,396 were children.

The record winds up appropriately with the following comment by the Chief Probation Officer of the Juvenile Court: "From my experience in this Juvenile Court I would name first, on the list of agencies preventing delinquency, the public playground." Which piece of testimony I have found confirmed in many another of the great American cities, statistics

showing clearly that juvenile delinquency (one of the most terrible of America's problems) tends to be lowest in those parts of the city which are nearest to supervised playgrounds (not to neglected ones) and highest in the parts which are so far away from the playgrounds that the children cannot get access to them—a statistical fact which other nations, accustomed to muddling through and impatient of statistics, might take note of to their advantage.

Let the same nations note also that all the executive positions of the Recreation Commission, except that of the Superintendent (a lady), are recognized as belonging to the Civil Service of the State and that every \$100 of the City assessment is subject to a tax of not less than seven cents per annum for the support of recreation.

This tax, I will say in passing, varies in different cities, and in some which I have visited the economic disaster has caused its suspension. But, again and again, I have heard governors of States and mayors of cities, when taking the chair for me at public meetings, declare in emphatic terms "that there is no public money raised and spent in the United States to-day that gives better results." In one city, virtually bankrupt, I heard the mayor say "that while many citizens in that city thought that recreation was the first thing to cut out of the city budget, he, on his part, was determined that it should

be the last." There are all sorts of mayors in American cities; for some, as I have already hinted, the city gaol would be a more fitting habitation than the city hall; but others, I can bear witness, are incorruptible gentlemen and heroic public servants.

## CHAPTER XX

### IN OKLAHOMA

#### *Oklahoma City.*

Oklahoma City is 43 years old.<sup>1</sup> In that brief time it has evolved from a state of savagery to what would be judged, by prevailing standards, a high state of civilization, amply supplied, as I well know from the entertainment afforded me, with all the urbanities and creature comforts dear to the children of the Old Adam as they walk the earth in our day and generation—from symphony concerts to morning tea (if you ask for it) served at your bedside by a waiter in spotless uniform. The history of the City is a highly compressed record of violence, brutality, rapacity, romance and heroic achievement—an epic in a nutshell. Edna Ferber's powerful novel *Cimarron* will give you the colour, spirit and swing of it, and reveal something incidentally of the astonishing vicissitudes in human life caused by the presence of oil in the deep places of the earth.

Was it not here<sup>2</sup> that a local minister, paying

<sup>1</sup> In 1932.

<sup>2</sup> No, it was not. I find on referring to my diary that the story was told to me in Shreveport, Louisiana, another oil-nourished city. But I feel pretty sure that similar things must often have happened in Oklahoma. So I leave the text unaltered.

me a call in the rather luxurious sitting-room assigned me at the hotel, said on entering, "Ha! how well I remember this room. Some years ago I was suddenly summoned to marry a couple from the oil-fields and the ceremony took place in this room. The man had been living for years in squalor in a shack, on a wretched bit of land. One day they discovered oil on it and he became a millionaire overnight. There was to be a luncheon party in the hotel after the wedding, and he implored me to stay and see him through. Not only was he ignorant what a luncheon party meant but he didn't even know how to handle a knife and fork. 'You bet I can swing a knife with any man,' he said, 'but forks are hell.' I stayed and found it was literally true. The man was a perfect savage." And I was told in Oklahoma of an Indian, living on the miserable reservation to which the degraded remnant of his tribe had been driven, who was enriched in a similarly sudden manner. The first thing he did with his money was to buy the biggest automobile that could be built. It turned out to be a huge motor-hearse, in which he was to be seen, until recently, driving about with his squaws, all fresh from the beauty shop.

Such stories may serve to illustrate the turns of fortune which have brought Oklahoma City to where it now is, with its symphony concerts and morning tea. *Cimarron* will fill out the picture. But of all this there is nothing to remind

you in the City as you may see it to-day. Its violent past has been effaced and even its own inhabitants, as they themselves told me, can hardly believe that these things happened but yesterday. May not the change be justly called an heroic achievement worthy of an epic poem?

If the state of a city's soul may be judged by the number of its churches and the variety of denominations to which they correspond, Oklahoma City should be able to make a fair showing on the Day of Judgment. At a luncheon given in the building of the Chamber of Commerce, at which it was my duty to function oratorically, the various denominations were well represented and the ministers seemed to be on remarkably good terms one with another. I sat between the Episcopalian bishop to right and the Roman Catholic bishop to left, the latter a vigorous Irishman whose appearance suggested that his philosophy leaned to the optimistic side. With the Episcopalian, who was evidently a man of parts, I had some serious conversation on the state of the world in general and the outlook for religion in Oklahoma, on both of which heads he showed some well-grounded concern. Not so the Roman Catholic. Overhearing some remark, couched in a rather pessimistic vein, from our side of the table, he shouted across—you have to shout sometimes to make yourself heard at an American luncheon party—"That man

(pointing to the Episcopalian) has only 5,000 people in his diocese: I have 50,000." Whereupon the Episcopalian, not the least offended, remarked to me, "That's true." On the whole the Oklahomans seem to be suffering from no lack of good advice in the spiritual department though there seems to be some indisposition to follow it. For myself the chief spiritual comfort I got in the City came from the view that met me as I looked out of the windows of my habitation on the 32nd floor of the Sky Line Club. It was the view of an illimitable expanse of level earth, illimitable in all directions, which seemed, in that translucent air, to be the floor of an infinite ocean of light, resting upon it as the waters of the sea rest upon their bed. No "magic casement" ever opened on a vision more divine. It was a vision into the Light Kingdom of Immensity, unfathomable and serene, as though one were gazing into the eyes of the Living God.

And now for a "survey" of things more terrestrial—the Recreation Survey of Oklahoma City, by Mr. L. H. Weir, expert surveyor sent down into these parts by the National Recreation Association to map out the land, to exhort, encourage and, if need be, rebuke; a closely typewritten document of 80 pages, replete with sound wisdom, technical advice and well-digested statistics, devoid of the pictorial features which render the Californian report so

exhilarating, but replete with qualities equally commendable.

The survey opens with remarks which show that Mr. Weir and the Association he represents are fully aware of the larger issues involved in the business on hand, that of inquiring into the playground equipment of Oklahoma City. He begins with remarks so informative that nothing short of quotation at length will do them justice.<sup>1</sup>

"It is reliably stated that the amount of the working man-power of machines in America has increased since 1900 about 1,100 per cent, while the population has increased but about 50 per cent. It is estimated that we have machines in such numbers that their maximum potential power capacity is equal to 700,000,000 horses, and reckoning one horse equal to eight men, our machines can do the work of 5,600,000,000 adult working men. It is said that Americans get from their machines work equivalent to the labour of about 690,000,000 adult working men toiling ten hours per day, 365 days in the year. It is stated by some authorities that it will be possible in time to produce all that will be necessary for domestic consumption and for the foreign market by working only four hours a day. The labour-saving machines have destroyed more jobs and positions than new lines of industry and commerce have created, so that there is a constantly rising number of unemployed people for whom there is no work whatever. This condition is in existence irrespective of any business

<sup>1</sup> By permission of the National Recreation Association of America.

depression, and has added enormously to the leisure of the people—an enforced leisure potentially dangerous to society. Again the need for keeping more adults, especially men, at regular employment tends to keep children and young people out of employment and is affecting the employment of women.

"The machines which have made America one of the greatest industrial and commercial nations on earth have also caused the tremendous rise and growth of towns and cities. Previous to 1920 the Americans were predominantly an open country dwelling people. To-day it is estimated that there are only about 25,000,000 of the approximately 123,000,000 living on farms. All the remainder, or a little over 75 per cent, are either living under strictly urban conditions or under the direct influence of such conditions. The modern city in America has been fashioned chiefly for industry and commerce. It is a kind of huge machine for the furtherance of business and industrial interests. The average city is not designed as a wholesome place in which to live. There is too much crowding and a great lack of open spaces. There is too much confinement indoors, lack of pure air, and an insufficient amount of sunlight. All those conditions are gradually weakening the fundamental vitality of the American people. There has been a very great increase in diseases of the heart, stomach, nerves, kidneys and brain disorders. Moreover several thousands of the people are killed annually by modern methods of transportation in cities, chiefly by automobile (31,000 in 1929). From 1920 to 1929 the total death roll from the automobile alone has been 190,850. Many thousands of the deaths were of children, resulting partly because of lack of safe and adequate places in which to play during their ever-increasing leisure. These open

spaces, if under the right kind of supervision, are a social insurance of enormous importance in that they prevent much lawlessness among children, young people and adults and tend to make for happiness and contentment. And finally they provide many opportunities for the self-development of body, mind and cultural interest which make for a life more abundant for each individual citizen."

So much for general principles. Mr. Weir then goes on to remind the City Fathers of their professions—and to confront them with their performance.

"The City Government in its published year books for the last few years has stated that providing of recreation opportunities for all the people is one of the three or four great functions of a municipal government. But it has not always been clear that this high position of recreation is fully recognized in actual accomplishment; as witnessed by the fact that Oklahoma City is the only city of its class in the South-West that does not have a year round system of organized recreation; that its facilities for active recreations are far behind the more progressive cities of its class; that the moneys allotted to operation and maintenance of its parks are an exceedingly small percentage of the total public expenses; that large sections of the city are unprovided with neighbourhood playing parks, that the majority of the children are without an adequate system of play centres under leadership during the summer months."

But are you not becoming a little too hard, Mr. Weir, on a city only forty-three years old, a

city whose recreations forty-three years ago were apt to be punctuated by pistol shots? Come over with us to some older countries we know of and we will introduce you to cities a thousand years old which might well wince under your rebukes and repent themselves in sackcloth and ashes. Ha! we observe you, too, are beginning to relent. Your next paragraph is more encouraging:

"However, during the forty-two years of the history of the city much has been accomplished, especially in the acquisition of properties, and some very commendable progress is to be noted in development of properties. During the past few years there has been a notable increase in recreation opportunities. There has also been a considerable increase in the amount of moneys appropriated currently for the department of parks. The promise of the future is forward-looking, and I have no doubt that during this decade Oklahoma City will be one of those cities of this country that has *visioned* in *accomplishments* the significance of an age that through science and invention is constantly increasing the leisure of the people."

We are glad, Mr. Weir, that you have no doubt of a better future at hand in Oklahoma City. Neither have we. From what we observed we think it likely that the City Fathers will not be content much longer with empty professions that "recreation is one of the three or four chief functions of municipal government" but will

produce the good works to correspond, the *accomplishment* you have underlined. Did we not see with our own eyes some of them already begun and well advanced—wide and pleasant areas in the illimitable outskirts, such as a thousand-year city may not dream of possessing, in process of conversion, under the technique you recommend, into playgrounds for the body and gardens for the soul; municipal golf courses, we forget how many, and the newly-created Zoological Parks where an elephant, a camel, a tiger and a pair of buffaloes, sullen but acquiescent, have already arrived, the vanguard of a complete Noah's Ark procession now on order. Not so bad for a city 43 years old! Judge nothing in America by the point at which it has arrived. Judge all things by the direction in which they are moving.

In confirmation of which important principle, the following table of expenditures on organized recreation by "the more progressive cities of the class of Oklahoma City" will be found to have some value, as well as an interest of its own.

<i>Name of City</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Expenditures for Organized Recreation alone (1930)</i>
Ft. Worth, Texas	... 160,892	\$79,987.53
Youngstown, O.	... 170,004	\$145,270.16
Hartford, Conn.	... 163,818	\$64,850.00

*Expenditures for  
Organized  
Recreation  
alone (1930)*

<i>Name of City</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Expenditures for Organized Recreation alone (1930)</i>
Salt Lake City, Utah	140,184	\$112,611.65
Sacramento, Cal.	143,428	\$85,346.71
San Diego, Cal.	147,897	\$81,240.02
Long Beach, Cal.	141,528	\$148,318.03
Springfield, Mass.	149,861	\$88,208.20
Dallas, Texas	260,397	\$94,382.16
Oakland, Cal.	284,213	\$279,200.00

## CHAPTER XXI

### INDOORS AND OUTDOORS

*Cleveland, Ohio.*

To what cause shall we assign this interesting phenomenon of civic recreation, this public interest in the problem of leisure, this welcome to the stranger who comes to talk about work and play—a welcome so warm that a brass band may be waiting to escort him from station to hotel, as once nearly happened to me at a town in Texas, and would have happened but for a “Please don’t” conveyed to the right quarter in the nick of time. Shall we explain it by saying that the Americans are pre-eminently an outdoor, game-playing, sport-loving, fresh-air exercising people? Because their civic management of these things is ahead of the English, or because their crew has beaten ours at Henley, shall we conclude that their life is less sedentary, less confined within walls and more largely spent in the fresh air and under the open sky than ours? That, I think, would be a mistaken explanation.

I would say rather that the facts before us represent a *natural reaction* against unnatural

conditions: against a dominant tendency to the indoor life; against over sophistication and artificiality; against the tyrannies of mechanism nowhere so oppressive as in America; against a life too exclusively devoted to business and money-making with its attendant confinement in cities; a reaction, therefore, if not against urban civilization in general, at least against the worst features of it. A reaction against all these things and therewith an awakening of hungers for beauty, creativeness, self-expression, companionship with nature and the freedom of the soul. This is why a brass band may be waiting for you at the station when you come to the city to talk about "the unity of work and play." The citizens of that city think of you as a possible liberator, come to show them the pathway to a new freedom, the freedom of the soul.<sup>1</sup>

When the Puritans settled in New England they left the sports of the Merry Old England far behind them, and regarding them as allied to the abominations of the Scarlet Woman, nay even "conducive thereunto," they frowned upon their revival. Moreover they were too busy with the struggle for bare existence against a savage climate and savage human enemies to indulge in dancing round maypoles or such like vanities. No doubt their children were just

<sup>1</sup> In this city, Cleveland, I was not met by a brass band, but by a gentleman who has none of its qualities, my good friend Mr. Newton D. Baker, spoken of at that time as a possible Democratic candidate for the Presidency.

as playful and their youths and maidens just as inclined to walk in the ways of Aphrodite as they would have been if roystering cavaliers had been their fathers; for have we not good authority for believing that moral qualities acquired by the parents are not transmitted to their offspring? But the road to heaven was not that way; that way led to another place. For the first stage of their education into a great people the Americans were sent to a school which had no playground. And the effects of that omission are seen to this day. For the Puritan spirit, though extinct on the sea beaches, is still, as it always has been, a powerful factor in making America what she is. It survives in the fundamentalist prohibition of cards, dancing, theatre-going, smoking, drinking and in the notion (of which a rumour reached me in the south) that the 'cello with its booming bass is a more godly instrument than the squeaking fiddle.

If now we follow the subsequent stages of America's epic, as unfolded by the masterly hand of Mr. J. T. Adams, we can hardly fail to perceive that evolution has here abandoned its respectable old world habit of being "slow and gradual" and become exceedingly fast and headstrong. It has been too rapid, too hurried, too strenuous, too precipitate to admit of those genial pauses in which the whole community (*tout le monde*) takes to dancing on the bridge

of Avignon (*les beaux messieurs comme ça, etc.*) and select spirits to those higher recreations that are called Fine Arts. Since the birth of the industrial era American history has been a Yale-Princeton football match<sup>1</sup> writ large, with the ball made of dollar bills, and a civil war at half-time, a history without interlude, without leisure—for there are leisurely periods in the history of nations as well as in individual lives. Of these America seems to have had none, such as the Greeks had after Salamis, or the English after the defeat of the Armada, or the Germans after the Napoleonic wars, though it may be that unemployment, rightly interpreted, betokens that such a leisurely period is not far off. So far America has taken no rest from her pioneerings, no sooner reaching her geographical frontier than she began to hurl herself more violently against other frontiers that stood between her and the billions of dollars concealed in her natural resources. Such conditions are not favourable for the evolution of a people eminent in the lower recreation of outdoor games or in the higher recreation of the arts.

Turning next to the climate, which is not of one kind but of many, I am inclined to think that on the whole, though with notable exceptions, the climates of America are not conducive to the habit of living, or even playing, out of doors.

<sup>1</sup> The reader will accuse me of mixing my metaphors. But a Yale-Princeton football match is more a combat than a game.

The chief exception is, of course, California; and there are others of which I could name a good many, but with the qualification that the exception holds good only at certain seasons of the year, and often very short seasons, too. Even the savage climate of New England, with its fierce extremes of heat and cold, has its gentler moods in which, as Emerson said, "it is a luxury to draw the breath of life." But the luxury there as elsewhere is usually of short duration. Continuous, all-the-year-round companionship with nature, such as the changeable but less violent climate of England allows to healthy people who can put up with her glooms as well as enjoy her gleams, is very difficult in most parts of America and quite impossible in many. In these places your relationship with nature becomes irregular. You can never become, as Wordsworth was, wedded to nature for life; at best the relationship will be that of a companionate marriage. Your fair mistress will smile upon you for a time; but at certain revolutions of the seasons she will change into a fury, armed with "Gorgonian terrors," lash you with icy blizzards, roast you in torrid heats, torment you with millions of abominable flies.

Ah, the flies! I suspect they have much to do with the indoor habits of America. How often have I stayed a prisoner behind closed walls, screens or shutters, through terror of the devilish flies waiting to devour me outside. How more than once,

when the lonely woods or the lakes with their sleeping shadows have tempted me forth, have I come back to my friends, whose warnings I had passed unheeded, stung from head to foot, stung through my clothes, by poisonous mosquitoes and other unspeakable insects roaming America on Satan's errands. Did I not once join a camping party in the woods and go fishing the first day in a noble river, where you caught a fighting fish at every cast, and forgetting to take precautions in the excitement of the sport presently find that blood was running down my face in streams. It was the work of cannibal insects of the wasp denomination—winged reprobates who carry in their tails a flexible and exquisitely-fashioned surgeon's saw, coiled up like a spring; this they lubricate with poison concocted in their abominable bellies and, alighting stealthily on the exposed parts of their human victims, cut out minute triangles of flesh, which they forthwith carry off to their dens and dine upon in a general share-up with their execrable tribe; for the wretches, they tell me, are communists. He whose ill-fortune it is to be operated upon by these diabolical sawyers will find himself next day in a deplorable condition and an object of compassion to all beholders—his head swollen to the dimensions of a Cheshire cheese, his mouth twisted to one side, his apertures of vision completely closed up in the general tumescence

and his philosophy of life irrevocably pessimistic, while medical science stands by helpless. To one who has passed through an experience of this kind the indoor habits of America will cause no surprise. Noble scenery? Yes, and of the noblest. Fine air? Yes, emphatically. Sunshine? Yes, and everywhere. *But*—A lady in a Connecticut town, who had no colour in her face save what she had put there, once informed me that she stayed indoors all the year round; “From December to May because of the cold; from May to September because of the heat and the mosquitoes; for the rest of the year, because I’ve got into the habit.” “What,” I said, “do you *never* leave the house?” “Of course I do. But always in the car. I count that indoors.” She was about forty years of age.

The car habit—that is the proper name for it all over America, unless the car-instinct be the better term—is really an extension, or modification, of the general habit of living indoors. An up-to-date American car might be described as a comfortable sitting-room on wheels, artificially heated and lighted, of course, and ingeniously furnished with a shelf of books, mirrors (I have seen pictures, too), toilet articles for the ladies, a smoking outfit for both sexes with cigars and cigarettes at discretion, a lunch outfit (including a suspicious corkscrew) and a loud-speaker. The car is almost invariably a

closed one, and though the hygienically-minded will open the windows (provided there are no mosquitoes about and the temperature outside is not below 60) the majority of car-users keep them closed.

One fine Sunday afternoon in October (no mosquitoes then), when the temperature outside was about 60, my wife and I spent the best part of an hour investigating this latter point. Our place of observation was the broad bridge crossing the Charles River at Cambridge, Mass. The cars were passing, nose to tail, at the rate of 70 per minute, mainly in the direction of the open country. The occupants, as we judged, were mostly middle-class Bostonians, taking their families out for a Sunday airing, and nearly all the cars were filled to capacity. Observation of such a rapidly-moving mass was, of course, a little difficult and I can hardly suppose an American statistician will think the result worthy of inclusion in any of his graphs. At all events my wife and I, observing independently, concurred in the conclusion. Our conclusion was that 90 per cent of the cars were hermetically sealed, my wife remarking that she had never seen so many white faces in her life. We then walked over the bridge, a pair of solitary pedestrians, and continued our walk in the same solitary manner along the beautiful bank of the Charles River on the other side.

To this I will add another experience bearing on the same point. There can hardly be a finer public park in the world than the Druid Hill Park at Baltimore, a city of about one million inhabitants—as large, say, as Manchester. The park lies within easy reach of the city, covering 700 acres, a beautiful place of hills, streams and woods, where you may wander about for miles enjoying the charm of nature's solitudes. One lovely afternoon towards the end of November, the sky cloudless, the air just keen enough to be stimulating and the autumn colours in their last glory, we went there and walked for hours up hill and down dale, repeating Emerson's words that in such a place and on such a day it was a "luxury to draw the breath of life." For any creature we saw walking on two legs we might have been in the depths of the back-woods. Of all such the park was empty. Not a mother with her brood; not a baby in a wheel-cart. On the intersecting speedways hundreds of closed cars were indeed racing along, but of human walker there was no sign. At last we encountered a park-keeper who had been following us, I think, in the belief that we were escaped lunatics. He opened the conversation by pointing to a fine building—the public Guest House—and courteously informing us, with a look at my wife, that "if we were cold, we could go in there." It was well heated, he said, there was a loud-speaker and we should find it a friendly

place to sit down in. We replied that we were not cold at all, and had no wish to sit down; at which the good man seemed much surprised. He then warned us not to get lost and gave us directions, which we needed, for finding our way to the park exit. "But if I were you," he added, "I should go inside; you can telephone for a taxi from there. I can't believe you're not cold." I have visited other public parks, almost equally attractive, in many parts of the United States and found them swarming with human beings on Sundays and half-holidays, but deserted at other times. This, the Englishman reflects, would not be so at home.

To contend that the Americans have no outdoor life would be flagrantly absurd. It would contradict what has already been written in this book. But I cannot believe that they are a predominantly outdoor people, in the sense that the open sky with its vigours and rigours attracts them more strongly than the well-heated room. Or, if they are so—and the qualification is important—it is by way of reaction from their predominant indoor tendency. To watch their cars streaming all over the country you might indeed conclude that the centrifugal tendency is beating the centripetal and say with truth that "the philosophy of escape" has got a strong hold on this people, with consequences that remain to be seen. But if you follow those cars through their wanderings and study the

inmates at their destinations you will find, I think, that the cars carry the indoor habit inside them. How far the car is confirming the Americans in the habit and how far it is releasing them from it, is a very difficult question to answer. It acts in both ways and perhaps in the one as much as in the other. I have heard the question hotly debated among the Americans themselves with no conclusion come to. It is an important question and thoughtful Americans are aware of its importance. And, of course, it is not confined to America but only, like so many other things I have noted in this book, nearer the surface there than elsewhere. The fate of urban civilization is not unconnected with it.

## CHAPTER XXII

### AMERICAN ATHLETICS

*Denver, Colorado.*

THE other day I travelled on the train with a star football team on their way from some college in the west to play an important match in Pennsylvania. Getting into conversation with some of the team I found them very pleasant company and with many interests beyond football. Physically they were all remarkably fine specimens and obviously in high condition. With them travelled their coach; him I found repulsive, though I was told by members of the team, who seemed to regard him with rather mixed feelings, that he was highly efficient at his job. I felt sorry to see a group of such fine young fellows under the tutelage of such a ruffian. There was also a doctor with them, which seemed significant.

I could not help asking myself what good they would get out of it all in the long run, and found myself weighing both sides of the question without being able to come to any very definite conclusion. Their physique certainly was all that could be desired—for a football match, but is

that the physique that the male human animal needs for the sort of life a civilized man has normally to live? The Greeks would have answered, no. The strength of a man, they would have said, must not be measured by the standards you apply to the strength of an ox or a tiger. It was only in the decadence of their art that they took to representing Hercules as a man with abnormally developed muscles.

I have been present at a good many of these great matches, both football and baseball, and have never failed to admire the courage, skill and discipline of the players. But there is too much violence in it—I am thinking of football especially—to accord with my notions of sport, and the violence is sometimes malicious and cruel. Football is not a game to be played in kid gloves; but it loses the quality of a game when you play it with the mailed fist and strike in wrath. It is one thing to beat your opponents; it is another “to give ‘em hell,” and American football does not always distinguish between the two. As everybody knows it differs widely from the British variety; it is less flexible, involves a more rigid drill and leaves less to the initiative of the individual. The difference may be compared to that between the Prussian soldier in Frederick the Great’s army, drilled to a point where he couldn’t run away however much he wanted to, and the more lightly-drilled British soldier who sometimes runs away but is generally

disinclined to do so. There is certainly an element of Prussianism in American football, and Prussianism is not a good quality to introduce into a game. M. Bergson's account of religion as a compound of drill and mysticism (*dressage et mysticité*) might be applied to games—at least to the best types of them. In American football there is too much *dressage* and too little *mysticité*, and it is the *mysticité* that gives a game its essential quality. Still, as I have said, there is ample room left for courage and skill, and the discipline has its good side.

Indeed the play, as exhibited in the great matches, has been brought to such a high degree of technical perfection and demands such exceptional physical strength in the players, that only a very few young men in a town or a college can ever hope to take part in it—I mean at that high pitch. It is essentially an affair of trained experts and of the few who are born with special aptitudes for that kind of expertness and prowess. I doubt if one per cent of the young men at Harvard, Princeton or Yale have the faintest chance of ever playing in their college teams. I doubt if the percentage is higher than that of those who are likely to become poets. The great game is essentially a spectacle, exhibited by a play-aristocracy for the entertainment of the multitude, and stands as far removed from what the multitude themselves can do as a tournament of great lords in armour stood removed

from the crowds of gaping Gurths and chattering Wambas who watched the performance from the side lines. To be sure, the performance of these experts sets a standard for second-rate players to judge themselves by, just as a performance on the tight rope sets a standard of the way to keep our balance when crossing a stream on a plank bridge. And that no doubt is salutary. Yet no one who has studied these enormous crowds—and I have seen as many as eighty thousand people in one—would think for a moment that they have paid their two or even four dollars for the purpose of acquiring a standard of excellence in a play or in anything else. They have paid to see a fight. And a fight is what they see.

The size of the crowds, the wild enthusiasm they display as the performance proceeds, the blaring of brass bands at every successful hit or run, the groans that arise at unsuccessful dittos, do not convince me that the American people have a genius for sport. And even if they have—and I am not going to dogmatize about the matter—it would have some difficulty in surviving in presence of the formidable money interests which grow up round these spectacular games. How, for example, a genuine sporting spirit can maintain itself in a university which turns over 400,000 dollars as gate money for a single match “beats me,” as they say in Yorkshire “oller.” Similar

reflexions would not be altogether out of place in other countries. But in America the commercialization of sport has gone to lengths unheard of, at least by me, in any other age or nation.

But again, we must be on our guard against generalizations. Football and baseball are not the only games played in America. There are at least 30 other nameable varieties known to me, and most of them popular games, too. In studying the report of the Recreation Commission of San Francisco, we noticed that no less than 79 "recreational activities" figured on the list. Most of these are games and the greater part of them have escaped commercialization. In the variety of her popular games, not all of them, it is true, outdoor, my impression is that America is ahead of Great Britain. How far this goes to redress an otherwise uneven balance the reader must be left to judge for himself. But as I have elsewhere ventured the opinion that the best elements of American life are to be looked for in cities not of the greatest size and wealth, but in the smaller ones, so I will say here that the lesser games of America give you a higher estimate of her capacities in the field of play, than the great commercialized exhibitions I have just touched upon.

No; if you would be shown America at play I shall not take you to the Yale-Princeton match with its 80,000 spectators, but to another play-

ground where there are no spectators, save you and me, but something more significant to look upon, namely 500 children of both sexes at play. It is the playground of an elementary school in Kansas City. The area is not very large but sufficient for its purpose, and the surroundings are not very beautiful. At the hour appointed out come the children in their hundreds, quick moving but not disorderly. We look for a single dirty child; as usual we cannot find one. Twelve games are waiting for them; twelve, mark you; in an instant the children break up into groups, each to the game of its own free choosing; each group also has its leader chosen from among themselves. They fall to it; dancing, leaping, running; balls big and little fly in all directions; yells of delight rend the air. None is pulling his neighbour's hair or nose; none is throwing his neighbour's cap over the wall, or kicking his shins; none is shedding tears; none is looking on miserably; *all* are playing: the merriest sight you ever saw. Time up, a whistle blows; the groups reform spontaneously: in three minutes the playground is empty.

You have been looking at a supervised playground for such children as attend elementary schools. And supervised by whom? By the children themselves. Yet not entirely. For all the time the headmistress has been standing by, quietly leaning against the wall, not interfering, but supervising with her *eye*. She has thought

the whole thing out, and it was she who blew the whistle. To-morrow the scene will be repeated, with a difference; the groups will choose their games afresh; the distribution will be different; the child leaders will see to that; and the headmistress, quiet, efficient, commanding, understanding her job, will run her eyes through the arrangement and see there are no mistakes. "Those games you have been watching," she will say, "are not fool games. They're real games. And the children love them."

It remains to be said, and said in spite of all that has gone before, that the Americans have at their doors the finest *natural* playground of any great people in the world—illimitable spaces, ranges of forest-clad mountains, thousands of lakes, mighty rivers, hills and valleys of every possible configuration, sea beaches innumerable, majestic regions where the night is as wonderful as the day, haunts of peace and loveliness the mere sight of which as one races through them in the car or the train awakes the hunger to make friends with them and linger in their embrace till death parts the companionship. Here is a playground for the soul as well as the body. From the high windows of my hotel in Denver the eye may roam over hundreds of square miles of it. Have I not penetrated the recesses of it this very day, traversed its rolling uplands, breathed its pure air, lingered under the shade of its mighty rocks, followed

the course of its tumbling rivers, gazed upward on snow-capped mountains, listened to the voice of cataracts calling to one another from precipice to precipice, and stood by the grave where Buffalo Bill, the hero of my youth, is sleeping his long sleep amid the silence of the everlasting hills.

..... *Stille*  
*Ruht oben die Sterne*  
*Und unten die Gräber.*

The difficulties of climate are very great; but the car gives choice of time and place and if rightly used may largely overcome them. The plague of flies may be overcome by other means: I have heard it said that their sudden annihilation by almighty fiat would be equivalent to a free gift to Uncle Sam of billions of dollars, how many I forget.

Whatever may be thought of the distribution of *wealth* in America, the distribution of her *people* is unquestionably bad. If the first is evil, the second is more so. And she has no excuse except that she has been the victim of fate. Considering the vast unoccupied spaces at her disposal the concentration of so many of her people into congested cities is as unnecessary as it is unnatural. Reaction against it, sooner or later, is certain. There are signs that it has already begun: the Recreation Movement is one of them. As a reaction against the

indoor life it is, more fundamentally, a reaction against urban civilization, which is simply indoor life called by a grander name; possibly, therefore, the herald of a drastic revaluation of American assets and a profound change in her manner of life. And how else shall we interpret the "philosophy of escape"? Does it not mean that the pendulum, having reached the limits of its arc in one direction, is about to swing towards the other?

## CHAPTER XXIII

### WALKING DECLARATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE

*Philadelphia.*

IT is a commonplace that if all the members of a self-governing or democratic community had their private conduct under rational control that community would need but little in the way of official government. And these conditions would be greatly fortified if the country inhabited by these rationally self-governing individuals were self-contained in respect of its material resources, isolated from other countries, immune from attack and free from entangling alliances with foreign powers. Interference with the private liberty of the citizen for the purposes of war and national defence, whether in the indirect (but potent) form of heavy taxation, or the direct form of compulsory military service, and the many disciplines and restraints incidental to maintaining the efficiency of the nation as a fighting unit, would then be uncalled for.

Such a country America traditionally aspires to be and actually is in the popular imagination. The American believes in his individual capacity

to govern his own conduct in a fairly rational manner, and theoretically, though by no means always in practice, concedes the same capacity to his fellow-citizens. He is a walking Declaration of Independence claiming the right to go about his business in his own way and regarding himself as a man who may be safely trusted to do so. His patriotism, as witnessed by his national songs and his oratory, are pitched in that key. They proclaim the idea of his country as a vast and happy home where millions of human beings, each one a walking Declaration of Independence, are left in peace to go about their daily business in an atmosphere of brotherly goodwill. This is what he means, fundamentally, when he calls America "God's own country" or the "land of liberty." This is what he means when he tells you that America needs very little government. This is what he means when he describes the Americans as a nation of "individualists." Though much has happened in the national history which might well challenge this conception, it still remains as a popular legend and its influence can be clearly traced in many currents of American policy.

The American's conception of his country is, indeed, his conception of himself "writ large." In his eyes America is not merely a nation of individualists, but, perhaps more significantly, *an individualist nation*. Her collective "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness" are her own

affairs. She is under no obligation to keep step with other nations in their methods of attaining these objects. If the others want a League of Nations let them have it, but she, for her part, will mind her own business and leave them to mind theirs. And this—so runs the popular legend—she may safely do. Is she not independent? Is she not self-contained? Has she not material resources on a scale and in variety equal to all her wants both actual and prospective? Has she not a people vast in numbers and gifted with all the faculties a nation needs to turn her resources to the best account? If all the others were to vanish out of existence to-morrow doubtless she would pity their fate and shed a tear over their departure, but would she not still be able to carry on and to carry up? Thus, in her collective spirit, no less than in the practice of her individuals, America is a walking Declaration of Independence. No wonder she walked out when the League of Nations was proposed to her.

Intellectuals, indeed, may often be met with who regard this popular legend as a dangerous fallacy, who know very well that America is not as self-contained as she aspires to be, and that, although she has avoided the political alliances which Jefferson deprecated, she has nevertheless fallen into economic entanglements with the rest of the world which count far more as a factor in the fortunes of her people than any number

of treaties, or other schemes aiming at a "balance of power." But these intellectuals, as we have seen, are by no means the dominating influence in American politics.

It is admitted by all who have looked closely into the matter, from Plato onwards, that democracy *without discipline* is, of all forms of government, the most impracticable and ruinous. Democracy without discipline is another name for anarchy, not necessarily of the violent, fuliginous, infuriated and reciprocally murderous kind (though it sometimes comes to that), but more likely of the muddled, confused, bewildered, aimless kind—the parent, in short, of just such a chaotic state of affairs as the world, in this nineteen hundred and thirty-third year of grace, now generally exhibits, a world not only lacking in dominating leadership but still more fatally lacking in competent followership. Which latter deficiency explains, when attentively reflected on, why great leaders fail to appear.

Nay, worse than that. A democracy without discipline cannot advance in any determinate direction, north, south, east or west. Place a hundred undisciplined individuals shoulder to shoulder in a line—even that will not be easy—and let the hundred be ordered to follow their noses and march straight forward. What will happen? In ten paces they will be out of step, in twenty the line will be broken, in fifty the direction will be lost, in a hundred the marchers

will be a mob. Such is the "anarchy" to which an undisciplined democracy condemns itself. No "system" can be carried out; no pattern made effective; no "planned society" evolved. These things require the orderly co-operation of millions, which is impossible when discipline is lacking. Common action there may be at times; but it will be dictated by the apparent expediencies of the moment, taking the form of a mob-like rush, in this direction or in that, under the impulse of a sudden emotion or a passionate moment. But there will be no plan, no system, no fixed purpose of one kind or another. Meanwhile the makers of plans, the givers of good advice, the authors of new systems, and the preachers of gospels in general will be wondering why the multitudes do not dance to their piping, why they fail to act even on the principles they assent to or the social creed they profess. The reason is that they *cannot*. They lack the habit of discipline such things require. They are incapable of the orderly co-operation involved in the march of millions to a distant object. What began in the fathers as wilful disobedience to authority becomes, in the children, sheer incapacity to obey.

Here is the dilemma in which American democracy finds itself involved. On the one hand, through the action of the democratic principle itself, great "problems"—for so we name them—have arisen which demand for their "solution"

the concerted action of vast multitudes patiently keeping the ranks and manoeuvring harmoniously to a given pattern. On the other, it has sapped the discipline and weakened the habits of obedience without which concerted action, on the great scale, is impossible.

And equally impossible on revolutionary lines as on any other. By a sudden rush of the mob revolution may indeed be accomplished, but the "new system" will not last a week, to say nothing of "five years," unless some tyrant, with an army at his back, be ready in the nick of time to seize the reins of power, make short work of the disobedient, lash the inert into their places and keep them there at the bayonet's point. With a population like that of Russia, bred to submission by centuries of oppressive rule, such things may succeed—at least for a time. But what would "the walking Declaration of Independence" have to say to it in America or anywhere else? How would the prophets of the "new freedom," the apostles of "self-expression," the born rebels and the professional mutineers react, when the order came from headquarters to toe the line and be ready to march, to do what they were told and take what they were given? These questions may be asked anywhere. In America they ask themselves.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ECHOES OF THE REVOLUTION

*Pittsburg, Pennsylvania.*

THE American Revolution is ill-understood by those who see in it nothing more than a successful rising against the authority of the British Crown. This may be all that is suggested by its military progress, by the incidents in which it began and ended, or by the utterances of a firebrand like Samuel Adams—its meaning as a *spectacle*; but the guiding minds, the mind of Jefferson especially, were thinking of bigger things, and these give it a different meaning as an *historical event*. In essence and intention, as the American Constitution clearly shows, the Revolution aimed at curbing the excesses of political authority in general, in much the same way as Luther's doctrine of "the priesthood of the individual believer" and the Reformation which followed it were directed against the encroachments on spiritual freedom by the ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Church. The two revolutions, indeed, have much in common, Jefferson's doctrine of equal rights to life, liberty and the

pursuit of happiness being closely, analogous to Luther's doctrine of the right of every man to be his own priest—the principle being the same and the difference only in the application. As the one aimed at making the individual his own master in things spiritual so the other aimed at making him his own master in things temporal. Henceforward the law-maker, or the law-making power however named, was to be deposed from its place as the ruler of the people and reduced to the quality of a useful servant under the control of the people themselves, while government, instead of practising the maximum of interference with the doings of the individual, was to practise the minimum, leaving him alone, except in so far as he got in the way of his neighbours, and free to make good his right to life, liberty and happiness in his own way. Henceforward, so to speak, the "law" was to be spelt with a small letter instead of a capital and the law-maker enjoined not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think. The object, in other words, was not to create a machine for the easy multiplication of laws, a conception of democracy entirely foreign to the spirit of the Revolution, but, on the contrary, to protect the citizen from the encroachments of the law-maker and to restrict the powers of the latter within the narrow limits compatible with the public safety. In this way "government" was reduced from the place

of primary importance in the nation's life to the place of secondary importance, and changed from a thing of awful majesty to a thing of common utility. Obedience became a virtue of minor rank at best and a vice at worst; discipline tended towards the minimum and "liberty" came into being.

Traditionally, therefore, "government," to the American mind, is not the factor of supreme importance in the national life. Recent events no doubt have weakened the tradition; but it is still sufficiently strong to throw a light on two outstanding features in American mentality.

Many years ago I remarked to Edward Everett Hale, then Chaplain to Congress, on the apparent unwillingness of the best minds in America to adopt the political career and their indifference on seeing political office fall to second-rate men. His answer, which I noted at the time, was significant, "In our country," he said, "we need very little government. We are not a government-minded people"—the connexion of which with Jefferson's principles is obvious enough.

To assess the results is not easy. On the one hand, a people not habituated to attaching supreme importance to "government" enjoys a favourable position for learning to find supreme importance in something yet higher; and I have met Americans who believe that "education," will ultimately become the central object

of national concern. On the other hand there can be little doubt that America has paid a high price for this advantage in the abstention of her best minds from the political career. Unfortunately what the best minds have left aside minds not the best have been quick to seize, and under their direction the process of law-making, which the founders of the Republic were intent on curbing, has run to unparalleled lengths, with Prohibition as its crowning achievement.

The other feature on which light is thrown from the same source is the lawlessness prevalent in all, or nearly all, the great cities. The statistics of crime, of murders in particular, of which only a small proportion is detected and a still smaller proportion followed by conviction, are appalling. At this point the "American dream" which received its baptism at the Revolution becomes somewhat of a nightmare. But here again the observer needs to be on his guard against judging the whole by the part. Viewing it as an isolated phenomenon one might conclude that the lawlessness of America was enough to sink the stoutest ship of state that ever was built. But far more significant than the lawlessness of the minority is the law-abidingness of the vast majority. When one remembers that America has been peopled from the first by rebels in *esse* or rebels in *posse*, "disobedient children" gathered from

all quarters of the globe and that even its oldest families are separated by not many generations from rebellious ancestors of one kind or another; and further, that the nation was born in a rebellion animated by hatred of the law-maker, and received a constitution that consecrated distrust of him, the wonder is, not that lawlessness exists on its present scale, but that it does *not* exist on a scale many times as large.

The American War of Independence from the military point of view, is acknowledged by competent judges to have been a very considerable achievement on the part of the revolted colonists. No sensible Britisher would question the Americans' right to be proud of the valour of their armies or of the military genius of Washington. That they were fighting in a just cause, though not quite as immaculately just as some American historians have made out, seems to be also the prevailing opinion on the British side, as it was the opinion of many at the time. If the Britisher wants consolation for his national pride, which at this date is unlikely, he may find a little in the fact that the defeated armies were largely composed of foreign mercenaries, Hessians, hired by the British Government to fight its battles in America at a time when it was up to the eyes in other quarrels; or he may reflect (with perhaps a touch of bitterness at this point) that the war would not have ended as it did if the French had not intervened in revenge on the

British for breaking their power in North America. He may think, indeed, that the fuss made in Boston about Bunker Hill is absurd and, after witnessing a public celebration of "Paul Revere's Ride" amid thunders of popular enthusiasm, his comment will probably be "Any brave lad who could borrow a horse would have done as much." But on the whole he will look with entire complacency on monuments commemorating British defeats, and on historical paintings of British surrenders and other misfortunes. At some of the historical pictures he may be tempted to smile. One of these to which my "reaction" was of that nature comes back to memory. It represented the "Boston Tea Party," at which a number of young men "dressed up as Indians" are said to have figured. The artist, a Frenchman, seems to have been imperfectly acquainted with American ethnology, for he has represented the "Indians" as turbaned cavaliers from Hindustan, careering about, if I remember rightly, on horseback and threatening the British with their scimitars. Who can wonder at Mr. Ford's declaration that "history is bunk"? This picture I found reproduced as a fresco on the wall of a student's common-room, perhaps by way of confirming Mr. Ford's philosophy of history.

Much has been said and written, and not least emphatically by Americans themselves, in condemnation of the version of these things

served out under the name of history to children in the common schools. If accepted at its face value there can be no doubt that the tendency of it is to keep bad feeling alive; and so long as the Irish retain the hold they have in the local governments which control education, it is hardly to be hoped that an impartial history of the Revolution will be allowed to pass current in American public schools. Perhaps the evil is not as formidable as it looks. There is a wide difference between teaching and learning; children don't always learn what they are taught, and even when they do learn it, in these days they don't always believe it—a point which propagandists of all kinds would do well to bear in mind, when bent on instilling their dogmas or prejudices into the minds of the rising generation. Indeed, I have observed among young people in America (and not among them alone) a tendency to believe the *opposite* of what they are taught, especially if it has been done too assiduously, the very fact of its being taught to order and with so much zeal inclining them to regard it as untrue. Young people are not so easily humbugged as we are apt to think, either about the American Revolution or anything else. I once asked the president of a college in a Southern State, where the teaching of evolution is prohibited by law, what the effect of the prohibition on the young people had been. He replied, "They are more

interested in evolution than they formerly were. Just because, it is forbidden in the schools they make a point of finding out what they can from other sources. The effect resembles that which has followed the prohibition of alcohol. They are all the keener to get it if they can." The anti-British propaganda of American school-histories seems to invite a similar "reaction." Mr. Ford's dictum may be a sign of it.

While professing for myself an attitude of complacency, not unmixed with sympathy, when confronted with memorials of the British defeat, I must confess that a memorial I came across in Pittsburg did cause me a passing wave of mild indignation.

Near the centre of this great city, named after Pitt, and in a position where hundreds of people must see it every day, is a stone, erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution, which records that on this spot the "British" were defeated by the French and Indians *in 1756*.

This is hardly fair play. It involves a distortion of history, and is unjust to Pitt, who has, I suppose, as good a claim as anybody to be reckoned the patron saint of Pittsburg. It is true that the troops defeated on that spot were "British," though probably there were "Americans" among them, and it was Pitt who had sent them out, to be defeated or victorious as the fortune of war might determine. But in 1756 there was no distinction between the

“British” and “Americans” as separate nations, and it so happened that the defeat which the “British” suffered at Pittsburg was suffered in the “American” cause.

The defeat was a small affair and perhaps hardly worth commemorating, anyhow. But one can hardly help reflecting that, if there had been more and greater defeats of the same kind, the French would have become the masters of North America, the whole history of the country diverted into another channel and the “American dream” never realized. The Daughters of the American Revolution should have considered this when putting up their monument. They should have remembered that the defeated “British” were fighting a battle for the mothers of the Revolution as well as its daughters, and phrased their inscription accordingly. The troops defeated were British; but the cause defeated was the cause of Anglo-Saxon America.

Among the military heroes deserving a statue for the part they played in the foundation of the American Republic, it seems strange—if one looks at the matter in historical perspective—that the Americans have overlooked the claim of General Wolfe, the British general who defeated the brave and formidable Montcalm at Quebec in 1759. At that time it was touch-and-go whether the Latin or the Anglo-Saxon race was to be the master of North America. For nearly a hundred years the issue between the

two races, which Seeley regards as the critical issue of the eighteenth century, had been hotly disputed on American soil at vast cost to the British in blood and treasure. Towards the middle of the century it looked as though the issue would go in favour of the French; strategically the British were defeated and would have been defeated *de facto* had not Pitt, one of the few Englishmen who understood what was at issue, determined on a mighty effort to retrieve the situation, and found in Wolfe the man to strike the blow. The French held the Valley of the Mississippi, and a chain of posts extending all the way from New Orleans to the Great Lakes and thence into Canada, formed a kind of net which, aided by powerful Indian tribes, they were gradually drawing eastward, with the strategic object of driving the Anglo-Saxon into the Atlantic. By a master stroke at Quebec Wolfe ruined the whole project which, until then, seemed destined to success. His victory turned the northern flank of the French position on the continent, after which the whole line was either rolled up or went to pieces. It was Wolfe who cleared the ground for Washington. The defeat of the "British" commemorated at Pittsburg was an incident of the operations which led up to the climax. I think that Wolfe deserves a statue in every American city. It should be placed near to Washington's.

As one travels through the vast regions of

the United States, west, south-west and south, formerly held by the French or the Spanish, but never by the British, the question of the British connexion seems to fade out of view. But in the narrower area on the east, once covered by British colonies, where memorials of the revolutionary war are abundant, the English traveller (if he is given to day-dreaming) will often find himself speculating on what might have been if George III. and his advisers had been less stupid, or Samuel Adams less versed in the art of inflammatory clap-trap.<sup>1</sup> My own feeling is that Providence was kind, kind to both sides, in ordaining that the break-away should happen when it did, when the area of conflict was small compared with what it might have been later and Britain too preoccupied with other cares to feel the full severity of the loss that befell her. Had it not happened then it would have happened later on, and with consequences far more disastrous to both sides. Considering the magnitude of the issues involved the cost in bloodshed was not high on either side; probably no great change in the history of the world, so far as it was due to military action, has been effected with less. When one thinks of the price other nations have paid to win their freedom, of what it cost the Spaniards to throw off the yoke of the Moors, or the French the

<sup>1</sup> On this point see James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America*, p. 83.

yoke of the English, or in more recent times of the long struggle for liberty in Poland, Germany or Italy, it would seem that the Americans should congratulate themselves on having come off lightly.

I imagine that the idea of forming the Colonies into an independent State had its origin at a period long anterior to the Revolution. We may surely think of it as a question widely canvassed in taverns and meeting-houses for a century before "the shot heard round the world" was fired at Concord. One may even venture the guess that the Pilgrim Fathers, as they sat in the stuffy cabin of the *Mayflower* and watched the cockroaches crawling about the floor, often talked it over to the tune of the groaning tackle and the waves thudding on the sides of their little ark. Sooner or later the idea was bound to come to maturity, and though it might conceivably have been settled later by mutual consent, the likelihood is that it would not, and that the bloodshed would have been on a far greater scale. The strife left seeds of hatred behind it, as such things unhappily always do, though, so far as I can judge, they have become completely sterile in England and are becoming so in America, such life as they have in them to-day being mainly due to the fostering efforts of the American Irish and in a lesser degree to such distortions of history as that of the Pittsburg monument. The Irish animus will

probably continue for some time, but I notice that the history books now used in the common schools contain less nonsense about the Revolution than the samples I saw twenty-five years ago.

From various small signs here and there I have got the impression that Americans attribute to the British a greater degree of sensitiveness about the loss of the Colonies than we really feel. They think, perhaps, that their own just pride in the achievement of their independence is matched by a corresponding soreness on the British side, that we are still haunted, as it were, by a dim feeling that the country ought to be ours and by regret that it isn't. The only visitations of such feelings that I can remember in my own case occurred at times when I was lingering in exceptionally beautiful regions, such as the Berkshire Hills in Massachusetts or the mountains of Western Virginia; but never in cities, never in consequence of anything that has been shown me of the wealth, splendour or power of America. In beautiful places such as I have named the thought would pass through my mind that we lost something precious when we lost the American Colonies, and the wish that it had never happened would follow. As to the wealth, splendour and power of America, if I think of all that as *inside* the British Empire, my next thought is of the British Empire bursting through internal pressure and going up sky-high in a thousand fragments. But it was

difficult to convince my friends that I viewed the matter in this way.

On one occasion a film representing scenes of the Revolution was being shown in the city where I was staying and I announced my intention of going to see it. My friends urged me not to go: they were sure that I should find it offensive. I went notwithstanding and saw pretty much what I expected to see, a succession of battle scenes in which the British were invariably represented as running away with the Americans at their heels, or lying about freshly killed, or ignominiously capitulating, while Washington with Lafayette at his coat tails stands by and magnanimously receives the sword of the weeping British commander. On reporting my impressions of the film to my friends they were greatly surprised at finding that the worst I could say of it was that I thought it stupid.

On another occasion when I was being taken round to see the sights of Washington by a very gracious gentleman of that city, I expressed a desire to see some historical pictures of the revolutionary battles, exhibited in the Capitol. I saw at once that he disapproved of this, and I was a little amused by the strategems he adopted to keep me away from the pictures. I had some difficulty in outwitting him but did so at last. While I was inspecting them he kept at a distance. Afterwards he made a kind of apology for having brought me into the neighbourhood of the

pictures and seemed relieved on finding my British feelings were quite unhurt. "

Another incident pointing in the same direction occurred at New Orleans, a city abounding in historical interest of many kinds. Here, too, I was taken round and very thoroughly shown the sights by a gentleman who had the history and topography of the place at his fingers' ends. At the end of our long tour of the city and its surroundings, he assured me that nothing had been omitted that I ought to see. I replied that this was not strictly correct. " You have not shown me," I said, " the place where the British were badly defeated by the Americans under Andrew Jackson in 1813 and their commander, General Pakenham, killed." From the way he answered it was clear that the omission had been deliberate. " What on earth makes you want to see *that* ? " he asked. I explained that the British, like old nations in general, were well seasoned in the experience of disaster, and that one disaster more or less made little difference to the national consciousness. " The British," I said, " have been well pickled in the course of their history; they have had about as many lickings as victories; but the lessons which have built them into a great nation have been learnt less from the victories and more from the lickings. For example, by losing the American Colonies they learnt how not to lose the others. I always like to visit the spots where these salutary lessons have been

learnt." My American friend seemed unable to understand the point of view. "It looks to me," he said, "like inverted patriotism." He then went on to explain—and I thought it showed a charming trait—that the victory at New Orleans was due to the Americans being armed with a musket which threw a ball several yards farther than the "Brown Bess" served out to Pakenham's troops, so that, while they were able to hit the British, the British were not able to hit them. He evidently thought that this would console me.

But it was not in the United States, not even at the "rude bridge" of Concord, nor at Bunker Hill, nor at Yorktown, nor when standing in Independence Hall, nor when inspecting Trumbull's pictures in Washington, that I seemed to come nearest to the American Revolution. It was in the Maritime Provinces of Canada, mainly New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, where, as I remarked before, more than one of my long vacations have been spent.

In those parts considerable numbers still survive, jealously proud of their descent, of the great or great-great-grandchildren of the American loyalists who were expatriated by the victors and went to settle on virgin lands granted them by the Crown in the Maritime Provinces. I came into contact with many of them, enthusiastic in their attachment to the British Crown and full of stories (most of which, unfortunately I have

forgotten) of the sufferings and adventures of their ancestors. One figure, however, stands out clearly marked in my memory.

In company with some friends I went one day to explore a vast and lonely lake in the back-woods. In the middle of the lake our motor-boat completely broke down, leaving us helpless, with no food, no oars or other means of getting ashore, and no prospect of rescue. The weather was perfectly calm, but our spirits were much perturbed. By good luck, however, a light wind sprang up towards nightfall which gradually drifted the boat into shallow water, so that finally we were able to wade ashore. We found ourselves on the edge of a seemingly interminable forest with no visible sign of human habitation. With much difficulty we made our way inland and finally came to a clearing, in the middle of which stood a large log-house with a light burning in one of the windows. Here we were very courteously received, in response to our midnight knockings, by a tall and dignified man well advanced in years, with a countenance and flowing beard worthy of the patriarch Moses. With manners befitting a grand *seigneur* he listened to the story of our plight and at once offered us the hospitality of his house. The food he set at the table was abundant and of the best quality; the house well furnished; the sleeping quarters spotlessly clean; there was a library of good books, a piano and many other indications

of refinement. Next morning we heard his story from his own lips. He began by introducing himself as a “loyalist” and went on to tell us that he was the lineal descendant of a certain Scottish Peer who had been exiled to the Americas for participation in the rebellion of the first Pretender, in 1715. His nearer ancestors had lived in what is now the State of New York, and had sided with the Crown at the outbreak of the Revolution, the family suffering a second exile at the conclusion of it. The house, if I remember rightly, had been built by his great-grandfather and had remained in its original condition ever since. His sons and daughters had left him long ago to join the enterprises of the modern world. He lived alone in the wilderness and there, please God, he would die. Every month a boat brought him supplies in exchange for such products as he was able to raise. Providence had greatly favoured him, he said, in bringing a party of English to his doors. “Your misfortune, gentlemen, is my gain and I hope the lady will pardon any shortcomings she may have noticed in my housekeeping.” Thanks to some tools he lent us we were able to restart our engine and returned to whence we came with a feeling that the American Revolution was a thing of yesterday.

Having committed the sin of digression, I may as well digress a little farther from my path in the United States, and so (at the end of

my book) be hanged for a sheep instead of a lamb.

In the course of another visit to the Maritime Provinces I stayed for some weeks in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, at a house built by Oliver de Lancey, grandson of the famous loyalist colonel of that name. Oliver de Lancey was then living; his brother, Uniacke de Lancey, now verging on ninety, is alive at the present time of writing. Many were the stories I heard about this family<sup>1</sup> while in the neighbourhood. It was of Huguenot descent. Colonel de Lancey (he of the Revolution) owned estates in the Bronx district of New York. He is said to have been a man of iron. He raised a regiment of loyal Americans at his own cost, and wept "for the first time in his life" when he saw his house in the Bronx going up in flames. This spectacle he witnessed from among the branches of a tree growing in what is now the Bronx Park, where, like Charles the Second, he had hidden himself to escape his pursuers.<sup>2</sup> He was a slave-owner, and settling on a Crown grant in the Annapolis Valley he managed to get his slaves conveyed to his new abode; their descendants are in the Valley to this day. The old warrior's end was tragic. The story goes that in a fit of rage he cruelly beat one of his slave boys, and being

<sup>1</sup> One of the family married Sir Hudson Lowe, Napoleon's keeper; another, Fennimore Cooper; another, the Earl of Cassilis.

<sup>2</sup> Remnants of the tree still exist carefully preserved.

abroad on his horse, and the weather hot, he stopped at the hut of a slave woman and asked for a drink of water, which she gave him. That night he died. The woman was said to have poisoned the water. She was the boy's mother.

Colonel de Lancey lies buried in a graveyard reserved for the family at a place called Tupperville. When the railroad was built across Nova Scotia it was planned to go through this graveyard and actually brought to the edge of it. There the diggers came to a halt. Standing by the old loyalist's grave was a stalwart figure armed with a loaded rifle and vowing death to the first man who put a spade into the sacred soil. It was the Colonel's son. For a day and night, so they say, he kept his vigil; and a loop in the railroad round the graveyard bears witness of his filial piety to this day. Some five or six years ago a celebration was held in the graveyard to honour the family, all the surviving members that could be found being present. First they toasted the old Colonel, sleeping his everlasting sleep in the grave his son had defended, and so on through the generations till they came to one of the last, Colonel James Arnold de Lancey, who had fallen on Vimy Ridge. Old Uriacke de Lancey stood silent by.

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
MACKAYS LIMITED, CHATHAM

